Matthew - Commentaries by Charles Stanley

Selected Writings of Charles Stanley: Volume 1, What Is the First Day of the Week or the Lord's Day?

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There are those who can see no difference between the seventh day, the Sabbath, and the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, except the mere change of the day. What should we think of the intelligence of a person who could see no difference between a corpse and a living man? Just as blind must that man be who sees no difference between the ministration of death and the present dispensation, which is after the power of an endless life, in which all is perfect and eternal, and of which the Lord's Day is the joyful expression. The offerings of the former, the dispensation of works, could never take away sin, could never give the conscience perfect peace. The work of its priesthood was never done. But in this dispensation of grace, "after He [Christ] had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

Now, as there is such an immense contrast between the dispensation of works by Moses, called the ministration of death, and the dispensation of the fullness of life eternal by Christ Jesus, so the Holy Ghost has most carefully distinguished between "the seventh day" of the one and "the first day" of the other. Indeed, to take in the full range of God's thought would be to see the one as the last day of the old creation, and the other as the first day of the new. God's rest in the old creation was broken by sin, since which the whole creation groans. God's rest in Christ, the head of the new creation, can never be broken. "We might as easily mingle light and darkness as the principles of the two dispensations; and hence the necessity of seeing the former to be utterly abolished by the cross of Christ before we can have the least apprehension of the present in the power of resurrection. Everything in the past is on the principle of obedience to a carnal commandment; everything in the present springs from the power of a risen life. Oh, that we did but know more fully "the power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3:10). (See Philippians 3:1-12.)

This will account at once for the striking contrast between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian's first day. The one was strictly commanded, and legal obedience enforced on pain of death to those who had engaged to keep the covenant of works. But to believers, as sons, there is no command at all to observe a Sabbath. Obedience in them is that of sonship. There is nothing in common between the two; all is contrast: and not only so, but the one can only begin on the ground that the other has really come to an end.

Turning to Matthew 28:1 we read, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." It was then the angel of the Lord said, "He is risen" (Matthew 28:6). So in Mark 16:1, "And when the sabbath was passed," the glory of the resurrection at once burst forth. The shadow of the sabbath passed over the sepulcher of Jesus and disappeared; it vanished before the glory of the risen Son of God. It is very remarkable that Jesus remained in the silent tomb until the sabbath was fully come to an end; and not only so, but until the dawn of the first day of the week very early in the morning. The night seems to have been added on, as it were, in perfect keeping with the fact that the church has to wait a little while; the night of which is now far spent. The dawn of the resurrection morn shall soon break forth. The sun of the new creation shall soon arise in all his strength and glory, to set no more.

The Sabbath as a shadow having served its purpose in pointing to Christ, and now having thus passed away, let us inquire what there is in the Word of God respecting the first day of the week. Great as was that work of creation from which God rested on the seventh day, yet infinitely greater was the work of redemption, from which Christ rested, and which God declared accomplished and accepted by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

On the first day of the week He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). He "was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4). "God raised Him from the dead" (Acts 13:30). "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner" (Acts 4:11). The Epistles also are full of the glory of the resurrection of Christ. The whole question of our salvation hangs on the resurrection of Christ.

Now it was on this first day of the week that Christ arose, the firstborn from among the dead — the first-fruits of them that slept (1 Corinthians 15:20; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118: 22-24). The question is, On what day did God take up from the dead His rejected stone and give Him this glory? Plainly, on the first day of the week, This, then, is the day of all days which the Lord hath made; and without a command those are glad and do rejoice in it who are one with Him that is raised from the dead. I know this passage looks forward to Israel as to the time of the manifestation; but faith sees in the resurrection of Christ the pledge and assurance of all that is yet to come. "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus" (2 Corinthians 4:14). As Jesus was the firstfruit pledge of the coming harvest, so that day on which He arose is a foretaste of the eternal peace and joy at His right hand in the glory.

It was on that first day that Jesus opened the Scriptures and showed His disciples how He ought to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory. (Luke 24 — see the whole chapter.) It was on that same day at evening, being the first day of the week, that Jesus for the first time declared the glad tidings of peace through His broken body and shed blood. "Peace be unto you" (Luke 24:36), and He showed them His hands and His feet. Oh, what a gospel of peace in the wounds of Jesus alive from the dead! And again, the next first day He came with the same message of peace. Who can tell the deep joy of the soul which has long been tormented with the awful sense of sin — when, for the first time, "Peace be unto you" is heard from the lips of Jesus, and conscience is forever satisfied, because God is glorified by the wounds on the risen body of Jesus. Surely that soul will rejoice on the day, the first of all days, when God raised up His Son from the dead.

But the disciples, though thus blest, were commanded to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father — the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:4-8). Now, it is most remarkable that the Holy Ghost did not come until the day of Pentecost was fully come. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully

come, they were all with one accord in one place ... and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:1,4). Surely there must be some reason why the Lord Jesus remained in the grave until the Sabbath was so fully past, and the Holy Ghost remained away until the Pentecost was so fully come; for the Pentecostal scene — like the resurrection — began early in the morning on the first day of the week.

The institution of this Pentecostal feast in Leviticus 23 will throw much light on this part of our subject. The sheaf of the first-fruits in verse 11, "He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath." Now the morrow after the Sabbath must be the first day of the week. Christ was that firstfruit sheaf which was waved in resurrection acceptance on the morrow after the Sabbath — not on the Sabbath, but the first day after the Sabbath was passed — on the very day the Jewish priest waved the literal sheaf Christ arose from the dead. "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord" (Leviticus 23:15-16).

To my own soul the typical instruction in this is very full. The waving of the firstfruit sheaf was on the morrow after the Sabbath, and the two wave-loaves are also offered on the morrow after the seventh Sabbath, or first day after the Sabbath. How wondrously everything met in Christ. On the very night the Passover was slain, Jesus was offered, the Lamb of God without spot. On that very morrow after the Sabbath, when the wave sheaf was waved, on that very first day of the week Jesus, our Surety, was raised from the dead and accepted for us. Seven Sabbaths had to pass away, and the morrow after the seventh must be fully come — the Pentecost — before the Holy Ghost could be given to baptize the disciples into one body, the church of the living God. Then was the church, answering to the two wave-loaves, to be taken from Jew and Gentile, presented before the Lord. The sweet savor offering connected with the sheaf of the firstfruits, contrasted with the leaven baked with the loaves of these firstfruits, is full of solemn instruction as to the perfection of Christ, who "hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor" (Ephesians 5:2), and the leaven of imperfection that is found in the church. As to itself, it is only as seen in Him who loved it and gave Himself for it, that it is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing (Ephesians 5:26-27).

But why, I ask, were they to wait, and why did the Spirit delay until the Sabbath was seven times past, and this first day of Pentecost was fully come? Was it not to show that the Sabbath, with the whole economy of the law, must be seven times past, utterly past, before God could begin to build the new-creation church? It may be necessary to notice, for some, that the church had no actual existence before the day of Pentecost. When Jesus told Peter about the church, He did not say, On this rock I am building, but on this rock I will build My church. Now, that Peter afterward understood this to refer to resurrection is very clear (Acts 4:10-12; 1 Peter 1:3-4; 2:4-9). Surely, as living stones we are not built upon a dead Christ, but built up in Him who is alive from the dead. Unless Christ raised from the dead is seen to be the foundation of the church, the church of God is not seen at all. That there may be churches or assemblies of men without any connection whatever with the resurrection of Christ is very certain. But that the church of God is risen with Christ is also quite as clear; for "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18). Alas! resurrection is beyond man's thoughts altogether. But it is God's thought, and that which is the marvelous contrast to everything that is earthly.

Should the reader wish to see more of this, let him turn to the Epistle to the Ephesians. The resurrection of Christ in mighty power is seen in Ephesians 1:18; the church is then seen as His body, raised up with Him, in Ephesians 2, and thus built upon Him, the chief corner stone. Ephesians 3 shows this mystery to have been kept hid from ages.

To return to Pentecost. On this first day the glad tidings of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus was proclaimed for the first time to the wondering multitude. Three thousand heard the Word, received it, and were baptized. When God formed man of the dust of the ground all his members were fashioned, but he was not a living soul until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Even so, it is quite true, the disciples of Christ were gathered together, but they were not a living temple of the Holy Ghost until He descended on the day of Pentecost. What a change! a timid band of fearful men now stand forth in the mighty power of God; and this great event took place on the first day of the week, even the morrow after the seventh Sabbath. Surely the believer needs no command to remember with gladness such a day.

Let us now notice Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." It does not say, when the disciples met to keep the Sabbath; no, the word Sabbath is never once used in Scripture to denote the first day of the week. But they were disciples thus met, and their object was not even to hear Paul; no, the preaching of Paul is secondary to "breaking bread." What was this breaking bread that was thought so much of by the early disciples, not on the first Sunday in the month, or the second, but on the first day of the week? The first Sunday in the month has no meaning in it, except as it expresses man's self-will, to do as he likes for his convenience.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

This passage is full of solemn instruction as to what it is for disciples to break bread. It is the Lord's redeemed people, remembering their Lord's death, and showing it forth until He come. This was the object of the disciples when they came together on the first day of the week. Am I a disciple? Have I redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of my sins? Then with solemn, holy joy, let me eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, on the first day of the week — that is the memorial of His broken body, and of His shed blood; let me thus confess and show forth that my salvation is not by works, but entirely of Christ.

But let us beware of making the supper of the Lord, either a mass, or a sacrament of works for salvation; no, it is the commemoration of that finished redemption which is the eternal salvation of every one that believes. It is for those who believe God and are saved (not for those who doubt God's testimony and hope they may, partly by works and partly by Christ, be saved) thus to show forth the tokens of this finished work; and though truly blessed for the Lord's believing people at any time to break bread, remembering His great love, yet how very fitting, on the day of His triumphant resurrection, to come together to break bread in remembrance of His death. This is no matter for human choice. If a child delights to do its parent's will, simply because it has discovered its parent's pleasure, much more surely, in the true spirit of sonship,

shall we delight, yes, rejoice, in the first day of the week; and loving Him because He has so loved us, we shall with longing hearts desire to do the will of Him who has thus saved us by His grace.

Christ loved to reveal Himself to His disciples on the first day of the week; and faith will still count on this.

The Holy Ghost was pleased to use the preaching of the gospel on the first day of the week; faith will count on His still loving to bring many souls to Christ on that day, and of course at all other times.

Disciples came together then on the first day of the week to break bread — disciples should love to come together now to break bread. Disciples then made collections for the poor on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2) — they should love to do the same now. Oh, how thankful should we be that we have such an opportunity — such a privilege — on the first day of the week to meet together, to break bread, to preach Christ, and to care for one another, none molesting or making us afraid. Shall we lightly esteem such a favor? Oh, no, God forbid! How can they who are not their own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ — how can such say, “I am not a servant, but a son, therefore I will do my own pleasure; I will go here and there; I will do my own will”? Ah, this savors more of Satan than of the spirit of adoption and love. Oh my brethren, we need more to feel the claims of the mercy of God, and more yielding of our bodies to God!

One word as to Revelation 1:10, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” This is the only passage in which “the Lord’s Day” occurs in Scripture, and I doubt not it means, as commonly understood, the first day of the week — the day which the Lord has made. The sum of it all is this: the Lord’s people, on the Lord’s Day, remembering the Lord’s death, and preaching the gospel to the world.

But, it may be asked, is there no command to the world about Sabbath-keeping now? Nothing, I answer, but to hear the gospel, believe and live. Man never could enter into rest by works. Peace and life are God’s free gift. Every act of obedience must spring from life in Christ. We are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, Jesus said, “My peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). “For He is our peace, who hath made both one [that is the Jew under law, and the Gentile without law], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Ephesians 1:14-15). “And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh” (Ephesians 1:17).

In conclusion, should the reader be one of those who has long and anxiously desired this “peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7), this assurance of perfect rest in God, and has never yet found it, let me ask. Have you not sought it by the works of the law, Sabbath-keeping, or what not, instead of looking simply to Jesus? Are we not told that He hath “made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:20), and that since Christ hath been set forth crucified, “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (Galatians 3:10)? You cannot possibly have both. If you cling to the law and try to do the best you can, you let go Christ (Galatians 5:4). If you cling only to Christ, you magnify the law, for all its condemnation fell on Jesus — its ministry is abolished and you are free, you are justified, you have peace, you cease from works, you enter into rest, even the true Sabbath of God. The love of God fills your soul, the Spirit of God bears witness that the blood of Jesus has cleansed you from all sin. The Lord’s Day will no longer be a day of bondage and sin, but a day of thanksgiving and joy. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus — old things are passed away — all is new. The new nature will as surely delight to do the will of God as the old nature is contrary to Him.

Some Papers on the Second Coming of Christ and on Prophecy, Awake! Awake! Behold the Bridegroom Cometh

Matthew 25:1-13

1. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8. And the foolish said unto the wise, “Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.”

9. But the wise answered, saying, “Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.”

10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.

11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, “Lord, Lord, open to us.”

12. But he answered and said, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”

13. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

What a difference it would make in the professing church, if this, and similar portions of God’s word, were really believed. The invasion of England could not give greater surprise, or alarm, than would be the awakening of the slumbering church to the fact that the Lord was really coming: yet such is the case; and the ignorance and sleepy carelessness of the great mass of professors, but proves the divine inspiration of this parable.

Let it be remembered that this parable was spoken before the present state of things had any existence; and yet, no person could now write a more striking description of the present state of that which bears the name of God on earth. True, it was spoken to the Jews; but its instruction to us is no less solemn.

Now, to come to the point at once, what would be the case with the multitudes who profess the name of Christ, if He should come at this moment? What would mere profession be worth — the lamp without the oil?

It is written, the foolish took no oil with them. Yet they took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. How common this is in our day! It is quite enough to belong to some religious society; a name to live, but dead. Perhaps, a beautiful lamp; but no oil, and no light. Is this my reader's condition? Then, there is not a moment to be lost —no, not a moment; for it is Jesus who says, "Surely, I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20). Rest not a day, nor night, until you know with certainty, that you have oil in your vessel. These are the words of truth, "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44). And again, "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (1 Thess. 5:2-3). Yes, is it not the Lord Himself who assures us, this awful event will take the world with as great surprise as did the flood in the days of Noah, and the overthrow of Sodom in the days of Lot? Now, to say the least of it, does not this subject demand a most serious consideration?

However men may explain away the Scriptures, the fact is the same: we are evidently approaching this great event — the coming of the Lord.

The very world seems conscious that some great event is at hand. If you have not got oil in your vessel, then what a terrible day is at hand. What a test this is! Look at it fully. Test your condition by this great event. Suppose the trumpet sounds to call the dead and living saints to meet the Lord in the air, in one hour from the time you read these words, (and who can say it will not?) Now are you ready to meet Christ? Does the thought give you joy? Are you sure you are His — that your sins are pardoned — that He is your Savior, your righteousness, your sanctification, your all? Does your heart long to see Him, who has loved you, and given Himself for you? Oh, what joy then to know that in one hour you may see Him and be like Him! Before God, is this your blessed hope? Or, are you afraid to think of the possibility of this taking place in one hour?

I must speak out, from close observation, and careful comparison of this parable with the actual state of things in this day. It is evident we have arrived at the time when the alarm must be sounded. The Lord grant that the timely warning may be heard.

Is it not fearful to contemplate how few know with certainty, or even wish to know, that they have oil in the vessel? In our day, it seems quite enough to be a member somewhere, and then fall fast asleep. If any one questions the truth of these statements, let him faithfully and affectionately put the question to all the members of any church or society, in almost any town in England; and the answer from at least five out of ten will be, "I hope I have oil in the vessel, but cannot say with certainty whether it is so or not." So let me press home the madness of leaving this solemn question in uncertainty. The moment is fast approaching, when the door being shut, it will be utterly in vain to cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" How fearful the sound of those words, "I know you not!" Who can conceive the everlasting anguish of heart to reflect on a life of self-delusion; — a lost soul to say, I was a professor, a teacher, or a preacher? I often read the parable of the ten virgins. Oh, fool that I was! little did I think my own case was described in that parable.

Oh, my readers, let me ask you, point-blank, are you saved? Have you the blessed assurance that God has for Christ's sake forgiven your sins? Have you received Christ? Let me once more remind you, it does not matter a straw what profession you make; if you have not got Christ, your profession will only aggravate your misery. These are the words of Him whose name you bear, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." Oh dead, sleeping professor, "Behold He cometh." What would you think if you saw a child trying to stop a railway train? Just as soon will human reason and unbelief hinder the coming of the Son of God. "Every eye shall see Him" (Revelation 1:7). The moment is fixed. What a moment for this world! What a moment for the five wise, and what a moment for the five foolish! What a moment to you and me! Glorified in the presence of Christ; or cast into outer darkness. Momentous question. Oh, sleepy world, awake, awake!

And blessed be the God of all grace, what an awakening there has been, and still is, in so many different parts of the world. Amongst all classes, the mighty power of the Spirit of God has been felt.

Cold professors, empty lamps, have been awakened from the sleep of death. The drunkard, the harlot, the most careless and hardened have been suddenly awakened to the awful sense and burden of sin. No words can describe the agony of soul through which they have passed. Thousands, and tens of thousands, have been brought to enjoy the blessed certainty of God's pardoning love and righteousness, the Holy Spirit assuring their hearts that "the blood of Jesus cleanseth them from all sin." God has been pleased to use the humblest means in accomplishing this mighty work. I have seen one after another brought to hear the word by a servant girl. She continued in prayer for them, and, in answer to prayer, they were immediately brought to God, and found peace. Little boys have gone into the street, and brought in careless sinners, who have gone out justified from all things. In one place a blind infidel; in another, a cursing old sailor, utterly broken down with the sense of sin, and then filled with the joy of Christ. Old men from seventy to eighty, and little children of six, alike brought to know the certainty of salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Whole families converted! Yes, and though fifty miles, yes, I have known them hundreds of miles apart, yet converted at the same time.

Oh! do not all these things say, "Behold He cometh, go ye out to meet Him?" One word more as to the lamp. A man must have oil in his lamp or he cannot have a steady light. Oil first, and then the light. He may light the wick without oil. There may be a great blaze for a moment, but it cannot endure. How soon it goes out!

In like manner, a man must have Christ first, then the light; he must have the Holy Spirit first, and then a holy walk will follow. A sinner trying to get salvation by a holy walk is like a man trying to get oil by burning the cotton.

If this is your case, my reader, if you have been seeking salvation by good works or a holy life, if you ever have made a great effort to be a better person, yes, and for a time have made a flaming profession that you were a better person, then let me ask you to take an empty lamp, polish well the outside; put in your wick, but put no oil in it; place it on your table at night, light the wick, and sit down and watch it. Ah! what a flame for a moment; but I think I hear you say, as it goes out, "Ah! that is I; I have done my best to burn, but my lamp is gone out." Man's utmost effort ends in darkness. Oh! how many who once appeared flaming lights are now in the darkness of despair; they never had Christ, and therefore could not endure. We cannot alter God's order. There must be the cause before the effect. The flame would as soon produce oil

as good works produce salvation. The five foolish virgins found, to their cost, that the one thing they needed was oil. “Give us of your oil,” they say, when it was too late.

What a wail of despair will arise in that day from multitudes who have had the formal lamp of profession, but have never had Christ in their heart. There is a solemn danger in the present day to the children of Christians; they grow up zealously attached to the sect of their parents, and, with an empty lamp, slumber in fatal security; or sincerely striving for a time (without oil) to imitate the light of their parents, they become discouraged by repeated failure. Satan whispers, “It is all a sham;” and they are but too ready to be snuffed out, in infidel darkness.

Anxious, awakened soul, do you say, Tell me how I may get oil for my empty lamp — salvation for my perishing soul? How can I be ready to go in and be with Christ, before the door is shut on all without? Ah! is this the cry of your wounded heart? Then I have good news for you. All is done; God hath fulfilled His promise, in that He hath raised up Jesus from the dead. Precious, bleeding Sacrifice, Thou hast finished the work which thy Father gave thee to do. Lamb, once slain, alive again! And oh! awakened sinner, however deep the crimson dye of your sins, through this dead and risen Christ is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him, all that believe are justified from all things (Acts 13:38,39).

Better news God could not send you; more sure news God could not make it. If God were to appear to you this moment, and speak to you face to face, He could not say more. It could not be more sure; it is the word of God to you — forgiveness of sins to you, my reader. Is not this what your burdened heart wants — to be justified by God Himself from all things? I think I hear my reader say, “How can I know with certainty that I am justified from all things?”

Tell me two things, and I will tell you a third.

1st. “Do you believe with certainty that Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross, the sacrifice for sins?”

“Oh, yes, I believe that in my very heart.” “How do you know this? God says it in His word, that is how you know, is it not?” “It is.”

2nd. “Do you believe with certainty that God has raised up that same Jesus from the dead?”

“Yes, with certainty, I believe that in my very heart.”

How do you know this? By the same bore testimony of God’s word. Then I will tell you a third thing. That same sure word of God says, “ALL who believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39).

Now, if I am certain of the first and second, why not of the third? I know Jesus died for sins; God’s word says so. I know God raised Him from the dead; God’s word says so. I believe God. I know, then, that I am justified from all things; God’s word says so. Yes, God says plainly, all who believe are justified from all things. Oh! awakened soul, ponder these words of life. It does not say, he that feels, or he that does; feeling and doing will come after; it says, “All that believe are justified from all things.” Do you believe that Jesus died, that Jesus rose again? Then why not believe what God says to you, and to every sinner that believes? He says you are justified. Oh what deep, unspeakable joy this gives to every soul that believes what God says. Do you, I ask, believe God? Then you can no more doubt the certainty that Christ died, than doubt the certainty that you are justified. Your feelings and doings have no more to do with one than the other. Christ has died the sacrifice for sins. God has accepted the atonement; for He has raised Jesus from the dead. You believe this in your heart, and God declares you are justified. Blessed, unchangeable truth. Have you thus heard the voice of Jesus — the call of God? Jesus says to you, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). Ah, all here is positive, real, everlasting. Away with doubts and fears; away with a negative, dark, uncertain, false Christianity. To the soul that believes these words of Jesus, all is positive, clear, certain, yes, everlasting truth. Oh, reader! do you hear the words of Jesus — do you believe on God who sent Him? Then He who cannot lie, says, “Thou hast everlasting life” (see John 3:26, 5:24, 6:47). Could Jesus speak more plainly, “Hath everlasting life.” Oh, how many souls have been gladdened with these words of late; and why not your heart? Why should you any longer be in doubt, since Jesus speaks so plainly to your anxious soul? God in His word and by His Holy Spirit, thus witnesses to you; you need no greater witness than God. Faith is the gift of God. Do you believe God; then surely you have heard His word, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Yes, for your comfort will I read you a verse of God’s soul-sustaining truth, wherein you may see how completely salvation, from first to last, is wholly of God, and therefore cannot fail, “For whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Romans 8:30). Solid rock, this, my reader; all, all of God; from beginning to end — all of God. Rest, oh my soul, in God. Have you been called of God? Have you believed God? Then your justification is as certain as your call; and your everlasting glory as certain as both. Arise, poor drooping sleeper, and awake to the certainties of God; predestinated, called, justified, glorified. Enough, my God, enough. Glory, everlasting glory be to thee, my God; thou art my justifier through the blood of the Lamb.

Once more. Have you, my reader, received the record of God; “And this is the record, that God HATH given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that HATH the Son, HATH life” (1 John 5:11-12). Yes, if you have believed the record of God, you have received Christ; you are saved; you have oil in your vessel; now for the light; now for a holy life. Stop, don’t mistake; it is no use trying for a holy life if you are not sure first that you have oil in the vessel. The objecting unbeliever will say, “Oh, this man means to say, if we only believe, we may go on in sin, it is no matter; good works and a holy life are of no use at all.” I answer plainly; good works and a holy life are of no more use for salvation, than the burning of the wick is for oil. But I should be foolish indeed, to say the oil was of no use for giving and sustaining light. No, without the oil, the wick will not give light; and equally true is it, that without Christ first, without salvation first, there cannot be good works and a holy life. It is thus Paul, and every true servant of Christ, since his time to the present moment, have had to battle against the false, absurd doctrine of works for salvation. The sons of darkness cannot see this, and hence the hue and cry of slander. (See Rom. 3:8.) We fully confess that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. “Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9). “Being justified by his grace.” Then, says the Apostle, “I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works” (Titus 3:4-8). This is the simple clear truth of holy Scripture — oil first, and then the lamp burns. Salvation first, God’s free gift, then a holy life. Oil for light, not light for oil. Christ for a holy life, not a holy life for Christ. This is the immense difference between the truth of Scripture and the lie of darkness; the one sets forth Christ first, the salvation of every believer, and the only power and source of a holy walk; this gives peace, joy, the certainty of salvation, and power for holy works.

The other sets forth works first, with the vain hope, that if they can be perfectly performed, the soul may then be saved, and sad to say, this is pretended to be the gospel of Christ. Alas! the soul, under such blind teaching is left like the lamp without oil, in helpless darkness; sometimes a little flickering of hope and then the sinkings of despair.

Has God now delivered you, my reader, from this awful darkness? Are you now certain that you have oil in the vessel; Christ in your heart; that His words are true; you have eternal life? Oh, has God thus shone in everlasting mercy upon you? Then “I BESEECH you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” (Read Romans 12.)

It is only to the children of God, who are saved, that the precious precepts of God’s word are addressed. Oh, then, my fellow-believers, we who are saved with an everlasting salvation, at such a cost, let us arise, and trim our lamps. Have we not burnt too dimly? We are called to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Oh, how we have failed! What conformity to this world! what worldliness! what carnality! what self-will! How little subjection of heart to God. What disgraceful sectarianism. How little real love to all God’s redeemed children. How little seeking to win souls to Christ. How little real secret communion with God, without which, the outside is mere sham. Oh, come, let us return in confession to our loving Father. Let each one, with lowliness of heart, spread out his whole case before Him, who is faithful and just to forgive, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The Lord is at hand. Behold the Bridegroom cometh. The lamp must be trimmed. Now may the Lord take off the charred crust, and so fill us with the Holy Ghost, that the little while before we see our Lord may be spent in the full light of His presence.

Oh, my fellow-believer, the Lamb is worthy of your whole heart. Yield all to Him, body, soul, and spirit. Yes, all: time, property, thoughts — all, all to Christ. Keep not back part. He kept nothing back. He gave all — Himself for you. Was ever love like His? Oh happy, saved, pardoned, justified child of God, hear the cry —the midnight cry — Awake, awake! and brightly shine. Christ is your light, your life, your all. By His death and agony; by His tears and groans; by the blood, and by the water that came from His pierced side; by His pierced hands, and pierced feet; by the bowing of His head, and giving up of the ghost; by His resurrection and glory; by His appearing in the air, to call you to Himself; by His smile and by His welcome; — oh, awake, awake! shake off your worldly slumber; prepare to meet your Lord. Behold He cometh, go ye forth to meet Him. Oh, God, grant that the henceforth of our little while may be spent to Thee. May not only our words and actions, but the very motives of our hearts, bear the light of your countenance. Keep us, oh, keep us, by your mighty power.

Rejecters of Christ; cold, empty professors; a few more words and tears for you. Think of those words, “and the door was shut,” “I know you not.” Satan’s world is now your choice; what will it afford you in that coming hour? What will property be worth then? What pleasure will sin afford then? What will the applause of men and Satan be worth then? Look that day in the face and tell me, what is there worth having when compared with Christ? How fearful the choice of the human heart. Have you chosen Satan’s world for your portion here? Then Satan’s hell will be your doom forever; and time so short. May God awaken you from your fatal sleep.

The form of godliness without the power, will be of no avail at the coming of the Lord; only those who had oil in their vessels went in. Yes, all who have not the Spirit of Christ will be left out; and then, oh think of the fierce day of the wrath of Almighty God. We know not the moment when the blood-bought church of God shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Many things have doubtless to be fulfilled before the Lord of glory shall come to this earth in judgment on the living nations. But I do not know a single prophecy which has to be fulfilled before Christ comes to take up His saints to meet Him. Let us, then, my fellow believers, be watching and waiting to meet our Lord. Oh, what will it be to see that face; that smile — the warmth and depth of whose love no pen can write, no tongue can tell. Ah, sorrowing, suffering child of God, wait a little while, and you shall enter the joy of thy Lord; you shall be tempted no more; you shall sin no more; you shall grieve Him no more. And those that have gone before. It was hard to part, what will it be to meet — to meet to part no more! Oh, what is this world to us, who look for joys, so lasting, so divine? “I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness” (Psa. 17:15). Oh, think, ye poor world-despised children of God, of the glory that awaits you, forever with, and like, the Lord.

Selected Writings of Charles Stanley: Volume 1, Who Are the Welcome Guests?

We have seen that this great salvation is entirely of God; as the friend who invites you certainly provides the repast. We have seen that the cost of this great supper was the death of the Son of God. No other price could have bought it. We have seen that the great supper meets every need of the lost sinner. Forgiveness of sins; justification from all things; no condemnation to them that are in Christ, at the great supper. No separation from that festive feast of love. Christ Jesus their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Their home in the place prepared, secured. The Holy Ghost abiding with them. The peace of Christ their happy portion. All provided of God. Nothing to do, nothing to bring; all given, and given forever.

Now, Who are the welcome guests?

Such a great supper, such a great salvation spread out before the multitude, hastening on to death and judgment and eternal woe. Surely, you would say, the whole world would at once accept so great salvation. No, it is not so. With all man’s boast of freedom, if left to his own choice, not one would sit down at the great supper. These are the words of Jesus: “They made light of it” (Matthew 22:5). “They all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:18). Yes, profanely or politely, all refuse the salvation which is wholly of God’s providing. Is not this a true and sad picture?

Tell a man to wash in the Ganges, he will do it. Tell him to give his body to be crushed by the wheels of the idol, he will do it. Tell him to lacerate his poor body, to put it to untold tortures, he will do it. Tell him to own the false prophet of Mecca, he will do it. Tell him to fast; to say long prayers; tell him to become an idolater, and worship a bit of bread, or the blessed virgin; tell him to shut himself up in a cell — all these things, or anything, the millions will do, to work out a righteousness of their own: to provide something to bring to God. But, spread out the accomplished salvation of God, not one of the human race will accept it. All make their polite excuse. Is this true? Look at Jerusalem, nay, look at the cities and towns of highly-favored England, for an answer. Nay, we don’t need go beyond the reader and the writer of these few thoughts.

Oh, is this so? Are you hastening on, day by day — every day a day nearer to death, judgment, the lake of fire — and yet every day rejecting the great salvation of God.

Blessed be God, even from Jerusalem, the city that killed the Holy One of God. From the lanes of that city the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, were brought to the great supper — three thousand in one day!

Who are the welcome guests? The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind. “And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou host commanded, and yet there is room” (Luke 14:22). Yes, there is room; room for the writer, and room for the reader. Yet there is room! “And the Lord said unto His servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). This is the blessed work of God amongst the highways and hedges of the lost Gentile world. Is not this grace beyond all measure, beyond all human thought? Not only is this great supper spread, but the outcasts of the Highways and hedges are compelled to come in. Oh, how they sing,

‘Twas the same love that spread the feast,That sweetly forced me in;Else I had still refused to taste,And perished in my sin.

We will take two persons as samples of the welcome guests. One from the Old Testament, which throws light, in picture, on this great supper. (Read 2 Samuel 4:4; 9:1-13.) We ask your attention especially to the kindness of God, in fetching a welcome guest, lame on both his feet. This young man had fallen, and became utterly lame on the day of the death of his father. This is our condition through Adam’s sin; we are fallen and utterly lame without strength. David said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? There was one, this lame young man, in the house Machir, in Lo-debar. There he was hiding from David in the place of Lo-debar — that is, the place of no pasture — such a picture of our condition. Are you there, not only hiding from God, hastening on to endless woe, but nothing to satisfy all the way? David sent and fetched him from his hiding-place. And when he came he fell on his face. Then “David said, Mephibosheth! And he answered, Behold thy servant. And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake ... and thou, shalt eat bread at my table continually” (2 Samuel 9:6-7). Thus God fetches the poor hiding, guilty, helpless, lame sinner, and says, Fear not, I will surely show thee kindness, for Christ’s sake. Think of these words, Surely I will show thee kindness. Surely! What a feast; and to eat continually. This kindness of God at once produces repentance. “And he bowed himself, and said, what is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am” (2 Samuel 9:8). Has the kindness of God ever led you to this deep self-abhorrence?

All is given to this poor cripple. He is placed at the King’s table, as one of the King’s sons. The kindness of God gives this poor lame sinner the highest place of royal blessing. It was the will of the King. “As for Mephibosheth, said the King, he shall eat at my table, as one of the King’s sons ... So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the King’s table; and was lame on both his feet” (2 Samuel 9:11,13). Wonderful as is this picture of the kindness of God, yet the reality far exceeds the type. David deals with him for Jonathan’s sake. God deals with us for Christ’s sake. He sits at the feast as one of the King’s sons. But as to all who are brought to the great supper, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:7).

Very beautiful is the love of David to one of the house of Saul, his enemy. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

One scarcely knows which is the most wonderful, the grace of God in spreading such a feast, or the wickedness of man in despising it? What a text is that over the door of the feast, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Look at it again and again. Yes, the house shall be filled. There is a place for every guest; and every guest shall fill that place. The poor, the halt, the lame, the blind, are welcome. The chief of sinners He receives. The greatest sinner you know is welcome, and is not that yourself? Cast yourself on His own words, “Shall in no wise be cast out.”

Do you say, Oh, I am a Christian without all that; I was baptized; I was confirmed; I say my prayers. Are you a Christian? Are you at the great supper? Are your sins forgiven? Are you justified? Have you peace with God? Don’t say I pray for these things. Many things we have to pray for. But the poor, halt, lame, blind, had not to pray for the great supper; it was all ready for them. To pray for a supper then, would have been to reject it. Don’t say no man can know whether he is saved or not; it is like saying no man can tell whether he has had his supper or not. The great supper, remember, is the gift of God, and to doubt it is to make God a liar. “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar” (1 John 5:10). In our next section we hope to take up a sample case from the New Testament, and also to consider the persons engaged in bringing the guests to the great supper.

Don’t forget those words of Jesus, “I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

Some Papers on the Second Coming of Christ and on Prophecy, Part 8 - Questions of Interest Relating to the Coming of Christ and His Reign on Earth

“The doctrine of the speedy return of our Lord seems to make a radical change in the whole aspect of Christianity. Instead of having the conversion of the world as an object before the soul, which is the duty and privilege of all Christians, we are told that things will get worse and worse until Christ Himself comes and sets things right. And how does this agree with the words of our Lord, who said, “Upon this rock I will build My church; and, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?” (Matt. 16:18). If things are to get worse and worse, is not this by the agency of Satan? And would not this be prevailing against the church?”

We have elsewhere seen that God does not lead us to expect a time of universal blessing by the preaching of the gospel. He is now taking out of the nations a people for Himself, and He speaks of those believing who are ordained to eternal life, in no way implying that the result will be universal blessing.

We have also seen that the millennium will be brought about by entirely different means, and in connection with the Jews being again brought into blessing in their own land.

Therefore the text quoted from Matthew cannot in any way alter that which is founded upon plain statements of the word of God. Nevertheless let us look at the passage.

It must be first noticed that our Lord here speaks of what He was going to build, not what His servants would build. It is highly important to notice the difference. The Apostle Paul speaks of himself as a wise master-builder who had laid the foundation: others build thereon. But then he adds, “Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.” He is evidently here speaking of a different aspect of the building from that which Christ Himself builds, or what need would there be of this warning voice?

Paul goes on to say, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). The foundation is good; indeed, there can be no other; but it is what is built that may eventually prove worthless. “Now if any man build on this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:10-15). From this it will be seen that there may be unsound building in connection with the true foundation, such as is represented by wood, hay, and stubble. How can this stand the fire? Impossible; it will be burned up. Satan is not mentioned here, though there can be no doubt that he is helping it all on; but it is what man is doing, and such work will be all burnt up.

This is not different from what we get throughout Scripture, even from the garden of Eden to the present time, namely, that the result of whatever is committed to man is characterized by failure. So that when the scripture speaks of things getting worse and worse, it is what man will be.

It is surprising that so many Christians do not see that this is foretold in the word, but are constantly speaking of great progress, and of things getting better. Look, for instance, at the declension manifest in the addresses to the seven churches in the Revelation. To the first it is simply, “Thou hast left thy first love,” which, indeed, we may say is the first point of departure; but to the last the message is; “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.”And yet how deceived they are, for they say, “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,” whereas God sees them to be “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

This is not a description of the world, but of the church, and therefore God here and in other places teaches us that there will be dreadful failures connected with that which is associated with the name of Christ. It will become so loathsome that Christ is represented as spuing it out of His mouth.

See also the destruction of Babylon in Revelation 17, described as an abandoned woman. “Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth... the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:9-18). What city but Rome is known to be built on seven hills? and what but papal Rome can be this profligate woman — though, as she is called the mother of harlots, the description may include those churches which have had their origin from her?

Yes, Scripture in many places speaks of the failure and degeneracy of Christendom; but this is what has been committed to man, and in no way touches that which Christ is building. It is what He is building that the gates of hell shall not prevail against. Many passages plainly speak of the eternal security of all that are Christ’s. “My sheep shall never perish,” said our Lord. And we know He will present to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” This is the church that Christ is building, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

It is true that what He builds may be by human instrumentality; but then it is compared to gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Cor. 3:12), which will bear the fire and will not be burned up. No, they, “as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). It is hoped that these scriptures make it plain that, though Satan will not be allowed to prevail against the church of the living God, and though there is eternal security for all that Christ builds, yet much that man builds in the professing church will be burned up, and that things therein will get worse and worse until the Lord comes. This in no way clashes with the coming of the Lord being the true hope of the church, indeed it confirms it in every way; for we have not to look for universal blessing — great as that will be when it comes — nor to await any events before He comes. We may be greatly depressed if we look around at what man is building; but if we look up all is bright there, and we know that suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of the eye, we know not how soon, the dead in Christ will be raised, and we shall be changed: we shall be with our Lord, and like Him forever. May those who are the Lord’s be always ready and looking for Him!

First Years of Christianity: And What Is the Church?, First Years of Christianity, The: Order of Preaching

First, as to preaching the Word. This evidently varied according to circumstances. The first day, the Pentecost, was ushered in by the descent of the Holy Spirit. A vast multitude was called together by the rushing sound from heaven. The assembly of God on earth was formed by the Holy Spirit. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke with miraculous power. Peter was then used to preach the crucified and risen Christ. The result is a new company is formed at Jerusalem. That company is called the Church, or more properly translated, “the assembly.” The word thus translated always means an assembly. It is so used to describe the nation of Israel in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). It is the same word in the Greek used to describe a crowd in the theater at Ephesus (Acts 19:32,39,41), and it is properly translated assembly.

But what is this new company called “the Church,” or “the assembly”? That it is a new company is clear. “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32).

Does this company, “the church of God,” ever appear in Scripture before Pentecost? (Acts 2.) Never, except in two passages, and there as a future thing (Matt. 16:18; 18:17): “I will build My church,” “Tell it unto the church.” Peter preached at Pentecost, but the Lord by the Holy Spirit formed this new assembly. It was not that He formed what we see now, hundreds of sects, or denominations. He did not form the Greek, or Roman, or Anglican churches, etc., but “the church of God.” It is of immense interest to inquire what this was, and what it is. Did you ever do this?

It was composed of all saved persons. “The Lord added [together, or] to the church daily such as should be saved.” This new company then was composed of such as should be saved. The true Church of Christ was only composed of the saved, or such as were being saved. All that

were saved were added together, and formed the assembly of Christ. To this agree the words of Paul, “To the assembly of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints,” etc. And again, “To the assembly of God which is in Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia” (JND Trans.).

Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1. Thus it is most certain that no person belonged to the Church of God, in the First Years of Christianity, except the holy ones, the sanctified in Christ Jesus. Be not deceived, if this is not your case, you have no part nor lot in the Church of God.

The Church is also the body of Christ, “and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). And mark, the body is not a body of Christians organized by men. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:12-13). This body, this one body, is composed of all true saved believers, and is formed by the Holy Spirit. Dear fellow believers, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27). Such is the Church, the body of Christ. “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing” (1 Cor. 12:28).

Mark, this is all of God. He set what He pleased in the Church, and what He pleases still remains. Do not be too sure that what you call the Church is the Church of God, but search the Scriptures. Only of this be sure, that if you are not saved and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, whatever other church you may belong to, you do not at present belong to the Church of God.

Now as to the preaching and ministry of the Word of God in the First Years of Christianity, we must notice the difference between individual responsibility to Christ, and ministry in the assembly. Individually, they had the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to where they should go, as Paul in Acts 13. He and Barnabas were sent by the Holy Spirit. And they had the fellowship of the assembly at Antioch. And we find them preaching Christ, and declaring the glad tidings at Antioch in Pisidia. Then Paul and Silas are directed to Philippi, by the riverside. See the same guidance at Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. In Ephesus we find Paul for two years daily in the school of one Tyrannus (Acts 19).

So it is evident that the evangelist or teacher is responsible, as guided by the Holy Spirit, to preach the Word wherever the Spirit opens a door for him. These should also be commended and helped on in their work by the assembly (3 John).

It is, however, astonishing how little we find as to the assemblies' meetings for worship and edification, that answers to modern Christendom. Suppose you look through the Acts and the epistles, do you find anything in the least like the mass? Is there any priest to offer a sacrifice for the living or the dead? It could not possibly be, since all the worshipers were forever perfected by the one sacrifice of Christ; and there is no more sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:1-18). To break bread in remembrance of that death through which they had redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, was done by the disciples on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). To offer another sacrifice would be to deny the eternal efficacy of the one sacrifice which had been offered. Do you find the disciples ever did this?

That all true believers were worshiping priests, is evident. “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15). “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

What kind of places of worship had they? Had they churches, or chapels, or temples? Had they consecrated bells, or buildings? These abound now, but do we find a trace of such in the New Testament? Not a trace. We find them in an upper chamber in Acts 20:8. Wherever the saints were gathered together to Christ, there was, and there only, the true Church or assembly. Was it not so?

Worship was spiritual—in spirit and in truth and in the holiest (Heb. 10:19). This was the very immediate presence of God, the third heavens. The tabernacle or place of worship of Israel was a figure of this. There is the atmosphere; the starry heavens; and the dwelling place of God, the third heavens, the holiest. And in spirit the whole Church had holy boldness there as worshipers. But as to buildings, so called places of worship, we do not find one, even in imperial Rome. Read the last chapter in the Epistle to the Romans, and all must admit that all we find are assemblies in houses. Thus the place was nothing. The Father had found worshipers to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

But when gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, do we find the order of worship and ministry described in the Word of God?

Concerning this matter, we find the Holy Spirit present (Acts 13:1-4). And whatever the diversity of gifts present, “the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal” (1 Cor. 12:7). Mark, this is in the assembly. But no man could take the place of the Spirit of God, and no man could take the place of the Lord. But if confusion took place, did they not appoint a man as the minister over the assembly? We never find such a thing. Confusion had come in 1 Corinthians 14. Do we read that one man therefore must take the lead or the whole service? No; we read, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.” Read to the end of the chapter—1 Cor. 14:29-40. It is quite true that human arrangements have set all this aside. But such was the Christianity of the First Years. The presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit was a reality. And Paul says, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (vs. 37).

Now whatever men may set up, it is most certain that when the assembly is gathered together for worship and edification, it is the will of the Lord that there should be this holy liberty, for two or three to be used of the Holy Spirit in ministry. Surely we have lost that deep sense of the Lord's presence which was in the assemblies in the early days of Christianity. A mere imitation, however, of this true order of ministry in the assembly, without real heart subjection to the Holy Spirit ever present, would be utterly powerless, and would soon degenerate into radicalism or self-will.

If, on the other hand, human pretensions have usurped the place of the Spirit, and human organization has entirely displaced scriptural primitive order, let us not boast, but humble ourselves, and ever remember the apostolic commendation is to God and the word of His grace, and not to any party or denomination of men. And though Christendom has ceased to walk according to the commands of Christ, yet we are warranted in expecting to find some who desire to own who is the Holy and the True. To such Jesus still says, “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and HAST KEPT MY WORD, and hast not denied My name.” And further, to such He says, “I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crow.” (Rev. 3:8 11).

Beloved reader, is the Lord's word nothing to you? Is it quite enough for you to go on with the stream of modern profession? Is it nothing to you what name you bear in Babylon? Or, while conscious of much failure, is it the desire of your heart to answer to what the Lord so graciously approves in the above scripture, indeed in all Scripture?

May the Lord use these few remarks on the First Years of Christianity to stir up our hearts, to seek to walk so as to have the testimony that what we do in these last days of Christendom may be pleasing in His sight.

Many of the readers may say, Would it not be most profitable to look into the scriptures for an answer to this question—

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

We will look to the Lord to enable us to do so.

The C.S. Tracts: Volume 2, What God Hath Said on the Second Coming of Christ and the End of the Present Age

There is a vast difference between taking up the Word of God, to hear what HE hath said, and taking it up to search out passages that seem to uphold any theory that one may hold. Now, all true Christians must feel that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most interesting subjects that can occupy our thoughts.

It is proposed then, in this small tract, to look carefully at what God has said.

First, at what God hath spoken by His Son, in the four Gospels; and secondly, at what God hath spoken by His Spirit, in the epistles of the apostles.

Before turning to the words of the Son of God, let us read, as introduction, the words of Gabriel, sent of God: “Fear not, Mary: for thou halt found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” Surely every “shall” in this wondrous passage, must be as really and as literally fulfilled as was the birth of Jesus. God said He should be born: it came to pass. God says He shall reign over the house of Jacob: it will surely come to pass.

Let us now turn and hear what God hath spoken to us by His Son, in the four Gospels. I would notice the seven parables in Matthew 13. The present period was then unknown, and Jesus only spake of it in parables. But we who now have the teaching of the Spirit of God, and know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, can read them more like histories than parables.

The first is the parable of the sower. Instead of God setting up that blessed reign of Christ, foretold in all the prophets, there is this time of sowing or preaching the word. And how searching the words of Jesus; only one part out of four even of those who professed to receive the word, are saved and bring forth fruit. “Some fell upon stony places,” “some fell by the way side,” “and some fell among thorns.” Oh! reader, beware lest thou art one of these classes, and thou perish forever. Oh! beware of the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches.

But some will ask, does the Lord Jesus teach that this state of things will continue; or does He teach that, by and by, all will receive His word and be saved? Let the second parable answer that question. A man sowed good seed in his field, an enemy sowed tares. He explains it himself: “He that soweth good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that soweth them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world (or age); and the reapers are the angels.” So that you see, my reader, plainly, whoever may preach the conversion of the whole world, Jesus taught the very opposite. That only one part out of four of the seed sown brings forth fruit to perfection; and that in the world, the wicked and the righteous would grow together, until the very end of this age. The wicked should then be “cast into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

The third parable, the mustard-tree, teaches, that when the professing body should have greatly increased, the wicked spirits who tried at first to pick up the seed would lodge in its branches. Judas was one of the first of these birds; but now their name is legion.

The fourth parable, the hid leaven. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” This, perhaps, gives the saddest picture of all; but not more sad than true. So far from the Church converting the world, the whole of professing Christendom has become leavened with the working in secret of this woman’s leaven of iniquity. Leaven in Scripture always denotes evil: the leaven of the Pharisees—leaven of Herod—leaven of malice and wickedness.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh parables teach the same truth. It is not the whole field, but the treasure in it: not the whole world, but the one pearl—the one Church of God, that is being taken out of the world. All are not converted, but in the great net of the present dispensation of time, there are good and bad. “So shall it be at the end of the age.” The wicked shall then be severed from among the just.

Matthew 24. In this chapter we find the plain teaching of Jesus to His little flock of Jewish disciples. It is the same subject as the seven parables, only in plain words, not in parables. In the first few verses (Matt. 24). Jesus foretells the destruction of the Jewish temple—which, we all know, came literally to pass. He was seated on the Mount of Olives—the very spot where His feet shall stand when He comes to reign. The disciples came and inquired privately, “Tell us, when shall these things be, and WHAT SHALL BE THE SIGN OF THY COMING, and of the end of the world (or age)?” Now read carefully from the fourth to the last verse (Matt. 24), and mark, there is not one thought of the world’s conversion. He foretells there will be false Christs — deceivers — wars, and rumors of wars famines, pestilences, earthquakes — persecutions, sorrows, death — iniquity abounding, and the love of many waxing cold. And instead of the world receiving the gospel, it is preached for a witness; and then the end comes. Much has been fulfilled; and much in this chapter has yet to be fulfilled. Bear in mind, that all these words of Jesus were spoken to His Jewish disciples, and have special reference to what shall befall that nation. In the fifteenth verse He says to them, “When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,). then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains,” and so forth. This evidently proves that the temple at Jerusalem has

to be rebuilt; for the abomination of desolation is to stand in the holy place. And if you read Daniel 12:11-13, and compare it with Daniel 9:27, you see the fearful act of the head of the Roman power, who causes the sacrifice and oblation to cease in the midst of the week—then mark when the abomination stands in the holy place. Then the words of Jesus will be most valuable to the godly Jews, who believe His testimony in that day. The moment they see this take place, they take it as the signal to escape. They have not even time to go into the house to fetch their clothes. Then takes place "the great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time—no, nor ever shall be." The remnant who have escaped may count the days that are shortened, 1290 to 1260, or half a week of years. The angel, speaking to Daniel of these days, says, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people (that is, the Jews). shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:1-2). Clearly, then, the setting up of the abomination of desolation, and the time of tribulation, are both future. And in proof of this, our blessed Lord says, what will take place immediately after, the tribulation: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:29-30). Most certainly, then, all tribes of the earth are not converted; or why do they mourn when Jesus comes? Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." How remarkably this is so before our very eyes! Though scattered among all nations, the generation or race of the Jews still exists, and waits the fulfillment of all these things. The Lord then goes on to state, "As the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Oh, what a solemn thought, that this world is to go on eating and drinking—rejecting Christ, just as the world despised the preaching of Noah, "and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be!" The most solemn warnings to watch and be ready are then given: "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Terrible will be the doom of that servant who SHALL SAY IN HIS HEART, MY LORD DELAYETH HIS COMING. Yes, he calls Him, "My Lord;" but his portion will be with the hypocrites, "where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Such are the solemn words of the Son of God. Oh! that my reader may be awakened to the solemn inquiry, Am I ready, and waiting for the Lord?

Matthew 25. The whole of this chapter also is upon the same subject. The illustration of the ten virgins each most plainly, that instead of all being converted when He comes, half of those who profess to be His are shut out. All slumbered and slept. Oh, professor! if you should hear those words, "I know you not;" "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." Another illustration is then given of this period, during which Jesus is away in heaven: "As a man traveling into a far country." And again, the whole of his servants do not improve their talents. Then "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory." Then to the end of the chapter (Matt. 25) the Lord most plainly describes the judgment of the living nations at his coming. You will notice, if you read carefully, that there is nothing said in this place about the judgment of the dead: that is quite a distinct event, as we shall find as we go on in the Word.

Even when standing before the high priest, on the solemn night of his betrayal, Jesus said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Alas, man always refused this testimony. The high priest declared it blasphemy, and pronounced Him worthy of death (Matt. 26:64-65).

I would now turn to Mark 13. The solemn warnings of Matthew 24 are repeated: "And then shall they SEE the Son of Man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory." Not only the porter of the house is to watch, but to mark the uncertainty of the hour when Jesus shall come, ALL are to watch. Some will say, "Ah, you do not need to think about the coming of the Lord; it will not take place in your day." Jesus says, "WATCH ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning, lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, WATCH."

Oh, how near, then, the Lord's coming must be. The present night of His absence is thus divided into our parts:—"even," "midnight," "cockcrowing," and "morning." Where are we? The evening of the dispensation is already past; yea, the midnight of the dark ages is past, or middle ages, as they are called. The awakening of the Reformation is past. Ah, the morning breaks. Watch! watch! the day will surely break. Oh, blessed are they who shall be found ready!

But perhaps my reader will ask, if Jesus does not teach that the world would be converted by the preaching of the gospel? Does He plainly say the contrary? Let us turn now and carefully examine the Gospel of Luke, and there we shall get a decided answer to the above question. Luke 12:35-48. In these verses there are two classes of servants. I would observe, a man may be a servant and not a son, as Balaam, and many others. Those servants are greatly blessed who are found watching when the Son of Man cometh. But the evil servant who said in his heart, MY LORD delayeth his coming—and especially that servant "who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Oh! is not this highly favored England? Does any nation know the will of God as she does? Surely, then, as it was with Judea, so will it be with this land. The heaviest judgments of God's wrath will be poured out on this now highly favored land. Her doom will be infinitely worse than the dark lands of paganism, where the will of the Lord has not been known. Surely, then, this warning is not a light matter; and who knows how near.

But if you now turn to Luke 17:24-37, the Lord says here most decidedly, that he must be rejected. And this rejection goes right on to the coming of the Son of Man. A rejection which He likens to the days of Noah and of Lot, "Even thus SHALL it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." Yea, so far from the world being converted, He says, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"— Luke18:8.

Luke 19:11-27. In these verses the parable of the nobleman going into a far country is repeated, with the plain prophecy that the great mass of the citizens hate him, and say right out, that they will not have him to reign over them. And instead of these being converted, at the return of Christ, they are slain before him.

Luke 21. This chapter is in many respects parallel with Matthew 24 and Mark 13. We must bear in mind that the listeners to this discourse expected that the long-expected kingdom of God on earth should immediately appear. Instead of which, the Lord makes known a period of great suffering and persecution. What a contrast to all their thoughts. Instead of reigning over the nations, they should be hated of all men for His name's sake. Then, in Luke 21:20, a subject is named that is omitted in both Matthew and Mark: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." "Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains." Strange as this might appear, so utterly opposed to the hopes of the nation, yet we know it actually came to pass. The Roman armies did compass Jerusalem, and the Jewish disciples did flee to the mountains. A Jew might have said, oh, it is impossible; God has promised that this city shall

be the metropolis of the whole earth. Isaiah 2:1-4. Truly every promise of God shall be fulfilled, when the time of the kingdom comes on earth. In like manner some will say, It is impossible that these great destructions should take place, because God hath said, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9). This shall certainly be the case in the days of the kingdom. But before those days come, let us closely observe these words of Jesus. The days of vengeance came on Judea; there was great distress in the land, and wrath upon that people. This prophecy, from Luke 21:20 to 24, may be said to be condensed history—prophecy fulfilled before our very eyes. They (the Jews). fell by the sword; they were led away captive into all nations. Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles. For 1800 years this prophecy has been, and still is fulfilled. Though at the time Jesus uttered these words, His own disciples neither understood or believed what He said, for we find them afterward asking Him, “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel.” But does the Lord say how long Jerusalem is thus to be trodden down? Yes, distinctly: He says, “Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” And what then? Will the world be converted then? The Lord says no such thing. But then takes place, as in Matthew and Mark, the great tribulation, “Distress of nations with perplexity.” “Men’s hearts failing them for fear.” “And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Now, my reader, from all these words of Jesus, can we come to any other conclusion than this—that the millennium cannot possibly take place, before the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; until then, wars, tumults, on Judah days of vengeance; on all nations distress. Read, then, carefully the solemn warning, Luke 21:34-36, “Take heed to yourselves.” Oh, do not be deceived by the cry of peace and safety. “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth.” Ah, you see that professor going to the world’s concert, or to the world’s feast, to eat and to drink with the drunkard. There goes, another with anxious brow and keen piercing eye, grasping at the world’s deceitful wealth. Ah, these, and thousands more, are saying in their hearts, “My lord delayeth his coming.” “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

You may have observed, that all the words of Jesus so far, have reference to this earth, or His coming again to this earth. Jerusalem in Judea has been the center of His instruction. This was suited to the nation in the midst of which these prophecies were delivered.

We now turn to an entirely new subject (John 14:2-3). I say new subject, for I am not aware of a single verse, from Genesis to this very passage, where this wondrous fact had ever been fully revealed. We get this when reading these divine words of comfort. Every hope in the disciples around the blessed Lord, in this night of sorrow, was centered in Jerusalem, as the place of His reign. But now, His last words having been spoken to the nation in John 12, He unbosoms the secrets of His heart, for the comfort of His chosen few, during this time, or period, when He should have left them in the world alone. John 13 unfolds the tender grace of our High Priest on high. In the east it is customary for one servant to hold the basin, and for another to pour the water. But Jesus did not ask Peter to hold the basin, and John to pour the water. No, the precious Jesus did it all: He took the towel, He took the basin, He poured the water, He washed their feet. Oh! that we better knew that tender heart. Cheer up, my drooping brother Christian; it was Jesus’ work alone to atone for sins on Calvary. It is Jesus’ work alone, as thy Great High Priest, to keep thy feet clean. Worthy alone art Thou, O Lamb of God. Thou art the author and the finisher of my salvation.

My reader, art thou a believer? Then thou art justified from all things—through the precious blood of Christ, clean every whit. Then do not forget He lives to keep thee clean.

Then, in this John 14 the precious Jesus can hide from His loved ones no longer the amazing secret—“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 unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” Of course, this was so new, they could not make out either whither He went, or the way. They had heard of the future glory of Jerusalem; but mansions in the Father’s house on high, and a place prepared for them! What, poor sinful fishermen to have a place with God the Father! Oh, amazing grace! Man, through sin, lost the garden of God; but Jesus was about to give His heart’s blood, that He might bring us to God Himself in heavenly glory. And mark the certainty. As surely as He has died and risen again, and gone to the Father’s house to prepare a place for us, even so sure is it, that He will come again and receive us to Himself. Ah! what would the soldier give, in the midst of the battle’s roar, to have the certainty of reaching the home he loves—or the mariner in the midst of the raging storm? What comfort, then, these words of Jesus give! However fierce the conflict— however dark and loud the roaring tempest, the blest home of His presence is sure. Oh, think of this, ye tried and desolate ones—ye fellow-believers, who are widows, or orphans, in a cold world! Oh, cheer up, ye afflicted ones! A little while: your home is certain. Is Christ your portion now? Then your home, sweet home in His presence, is most blessedly certain. “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Think not when ye see him, to meet an angry Judge. He comes to receive you to Himself, who hath loved you, and washed you in His own blood. He says, “That where I am, there ye may be also,” Perhaps you say, That may be true to them who deserve it. Did those who sat and heard these new words of wondrous grace deserve it? Ah! full well did He know. Yea, this wondrous disclosure of eternal love, was reserved to the very night on which they all forsook Him and fled. The Lord deepen in our souls the sense of this untold grace!

Perhaps my reader may ask, Does not the Lord mean death, when He thus speaks of His coming again? If we turn now to John 21:18-21, we here find the distinct answer to the question. The Lord plainly did not mean death; for after speaking of the death, whereby Peter should glorify God, He speaks of another disciple and says, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” “Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” Now does not this passage prove that Jesus did not mean death, when He spake of His coming again? Indeed, I do not know of a single passage in the Scriptures where the coming of Christ means death. It is indeed very blessed that when the believer falls asleep, it is to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Far better to depart from a body of sin and death; but this is quite a different thing from the coming of the Lord.

I would observe, the Lord did not in this precious promise, in John 14, explain how this receiving them to Himself, would take place. The explanation how, we shall find in the epistles.

Having found by the words of Jesus that the coming of the Lord does not mean death, it may be asked, Is it as clearly proved, whether the coming of the Lord will be spiritual or personal? Let us for this purpose turn now to Acts 1:9-11. “And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, 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.”

How could words be more plain than these? Did Jesus go into heaven in real person, the very body that hung on the cross; or did He leave that body in the grave and go to heaven in Spirit only? If so, our preaching is vain, and ye have believed in vain (1 Cor. 15). All depends on this, if He who died on the cross as our substitute, is not raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven, a real man, as our surety man in resurrection—then if He is not thus risen, there is no gospel for us. How can I possibly know that I am justified from all things, if my surety is not raised from the death due to me, and as my surety, justified? I fear there is a sort of indistinct notion abroad that Jesus is only a spirit. This notion undermines the very foundation of the whole gospel. Hence what pains Jesus took to convince His disciples, that He was not a spirit; for, says He, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.” Now does not the idea of a spiritual coming of Christ spring from that deadly error, that He is now only a spirit? He went to heaven and is there, a real, risen man. And IN LIKE MANNER will He come again, as real a person surely as He was on the cross. Will not the Jews say, What ARE those wounds on Thy hands? And oh, my fellow-believer, what will it be to look at those hands that were pierced for you? He is risen. He will come again in person.

But it might be asked, Can you point out a passage that distinctly proves whether the Lord will come at the beginning, or after the Millennium, or the times of blessing promised in the Old Testament? Let us turn and see as to this.

Acts 3:19-21. The Jews through blindness had crucified the Lord. Peter tells them to change their minds, and their sins shall be blotted out; and God shall send Jesus again, “whom the heavens must receive UNTIL the times of restitution of all things, which God path spoken, by the mouth of all His holy prophets, since the world began.” Now, if the prime minister of England was said to be gone to France, and would remain there until the time of assembling Parliament, would not that simply mean that he would return before or at the commencement of Parliament? Then does not the word “until” in the above passage distinctly prove that Christ will be in heaven until the beginning of the millennium, or times of restitution of all things? Then He will surely come before, or at the commencement of the kingdom of God on earth. Indeed, how can it be the kingdom if the king is not there? Surely Scripture explains itself. This one passage removes every difficulty from the teachings of Christ in the gospel. It might have been asked, How can the wicked and the righteous live together until the harvest or coming of Christ? And how can it be, in that day, as it was in the days of Noah and Lot—the earth full of wickedness—seeing that so many scriptures of the prophets have to be fulfilled, which describe the righteousness and blessing of the earth—when all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest? Well, I say, this one word “until” explains it all. That time of the earth’s blessedness cannot take place before, but after, the Lord comes.

Let us now, in the second place, hear the words of the Holy Spirit in the epistles. The first passage I turn to is Romans 8:19-23. We must mark well the change; it is not now Jesus speaking to Jewish disciples, in the midst of the Jewish nation; but the Spirit of God speaking to us believers, members of the redeemed church of God, so that now every word concerns us. Hence, in this passage, creation is waiting, with earnest expectation, “for the manifestation of the sons (not the nation). of God.” “The glorious liberty of the children of God.” Creation groans and travails in pain together. “And not only they, but ourselves also, WHICH HAVE the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY.” We do not wait for the spiritual reign of Christ, or for Christ in spirit; we have that now. “Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). But having this, according to this passage, we wait, not for the death of the body, but for the redemption of the body—BEING justified—HAVING peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Enjoying the certainty of no condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Yes, being thus everlastingly saved, still, whilst in this body of sin and death, we hope and long for, and wait for, the “manifestation”—”the glorious liberty” that will take place, both for us and creation, at the redemption of the body.

WHEN, then, will this glorious redemption of the body take place?

1 Corinthians 15:23-25. “But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s AT His COMING. Then cometh the end,” and so forth. Most clearly, then, the Spirit of God teaches that the resurrection of the sons of God, they who are Christ’s, will take place at His coming. And for this event all believers waited at Corinth, as well as at Rome. “WAITING FOR THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS” (1 Cor. 1:7). Mark, it does not say, ALL shall rise together; but “every man in his own order.” Christ has risen—the first-fruits. Blessed pledge of certainty! Then “afterward.” Who would have thought 1800 years were in that word “afterward?” Now, if there have been 1800 years, at least, betwixt the resurrection of Christ, the Head, and the body—they that are His, may there not, as assuredly there will be, 1000 years betwixt the resurrection of the saved, the first resurrection, and the rest of the dead, who live not again until the 1000 years are fulfilled? (Rev. 20).

It may be asked, But how does the resurrection of the dead in Christ at His coming, affect the question of the redemption of our poor groaning bodies, who are alive in them, seeing we are not yet fallen asleep? How can we and all believers be waiting for the redemption of the body at the coming of Christ? As to that, “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,” and so forth (1 Cor. 15:51-52). To this agree the words of the Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 4, on which I hope to speak shortly. Now, as we go through the epistles, we shall find, it was FOR THIS VERY EVENT that ALL believers, in all places, in the days of the apostles waited. Not for the unclothed state of the soul, blessed as that is. The apostle says, “Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (2 Cor. 5:4).

The Epistle to the GALATIANS, being the defense of the blessed truth of justification, this subject is not dwelt upon. Also, as the EPHESIANS presents that aspect of the Church, as already raised and seated in Christ in heavenly places, of course, the subject of the Church’s hope is not introduced. But in the PHILIPPIANS, where the Church is looked at more in the service of the Gospel, and pressing forward through a weary world, then this blessed hope, and no other, is distinctly presented, “for our conversation (or citizenship). is in heaven; from whence also WE LOOK FOR THE Saviour, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil. 3:20-21). Those who know the Greek tell us, that this passage should be, “We look for the Lord Jesus Christ AS Saviour,” and so forth. Oh! what a contrast this blessed hope of primitive days, to the modern dread of Jesus as a terrible judge. How sweet it is to a mother’s heart, when she returns from a journey, to see her little child’s longed-for face at the window; it claps its little hands, and would fly through the window to meet her. Surely, no mother would have her child dread her return as a terrible tyrant. When Jesus left His chosen ones on Olivet, He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and as He blessed them He was parted from them. In like manner will He return; whilst to the rejecting world He comes as a terrible judge. Yet, oh, sinner saved by grace, the first sight thou shalt have of Him who loved thee, and washed thee in His own blood, will be with uplifted hands of blessing. Oh! view Him coming as Saviour, to claim thee as His prize, bought with His own blood. In one moment, thy body of humiliation, sorrow, and sin, shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body. What a moment! Thy last tear shall be gone. Thou shalt grieve Him no more. Thou shalt sin no more. Oh, what will it be to see His very face—to hear His voice; that face once wrung with deepest anguish, bearing thy sins on the tree!

And, as thou risest in the air, by thy side, the glorious form of one (once thy prodigal wayward child). for whom thou wept and prayed, but saved at last; and loved ones, parting with whom once crushed thy heart with earth's keenest sorrow. Oh! ye believing widows and orphans, who feel the world's cold blast, oh, then! oh, then! "forever with the Lord." Ah! affliction is but for a moment, but joy in His presence shall never end.

Surely the certainty of all this is very precious. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then SHALL ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

Is it not strange, that the Church of God should have so sadly forgotten her blessed hope whilst in the apostles' days, it was the immediate hope of the youngest converts, as we find in the 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10. "How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God: AND TO WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN, whom He raised from the dead." Thus we see these young converts (for the Church of God at Thessalonica was not more than about a year old). were not waiting either for the conversion of the world, or death and departure to be with the Lord; but for the Son of God from heaven. Indeed, the apostles had no other hope. "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?" (1 Thess. 2:19). Great appearances on earth—swelling the numbers of a society on earth, raising funds, and building elegant (so-called). Christian temples; for these things the apostle had not a thought, much more a hope. His eye was fixed on the appearing of Christ. For this he labored night and day, that he might win souls to Christ; that they might be the crown of his rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet men say the coming of Christ is not a practical truth. The Lord give us more of this practical waiting for Christ.

If there be one thing more powerful for practical holiness than another set before us in the Word, it is the constant expectation of Christ. This was the prayer of the apostle, for these young converts, night and day. "To the end He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at THE COMING Of OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST with all His saints" (1 Thess. 3:13). This is the desire of every minister of Christ, who longs himself for the coming of the Lord; whilst others forget the connection there is betwixt conversion and the coming of Christ. He will think of it night and day, and pray night and day, that every convert may be found unblameable in holiness in that moment.

Some have a very great difficulty as to waiting for Christ. They would say, How can I wait for or expect Christ this very day, seeing so many things have yet to be fulfilled? I am told the Roman Empire has to be reconstructed. The Jews have to be restored to Judea. The man of sin has to be manifested, reigning at Jerusalem—and all this before Christ comes to this earth again. Must I not, then, of necessity, say in my heart, "my lord delayeth his coming;" at least, until after all these events. I cannot make it out how I am to be waiting for Christ today, since all these things have to take place.

There is no doubt the Roman Empire has to be reconstructed—(I shall have to speak of these things shortly). The Jews have to be restored: the wicked man of sin has to be revealed. Europe has to sink in grossest darkness—to become worshippers of devils or idolaters again. But let us look at the next chapter, and every difficulty will vanish.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. "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 who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and 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." Now, observe, in the gradual unfolding of prophetic truth, up to this passage, the coming of the Lord, in a general sense only, has been presented. But in this place there is a point of detail never noticed before. The special object of the apostle was evidently to comfort the hearts of these young converts, who were sorrowing because some of their number had fallen asleep. Bear in mind, they had only had three weeks' preaching (Acts 17:2). Paul's manner was always to set forth the passing away of all things of the old creation, in the DEATH OF JESUS; and Jesus the beginning and head of the new creation, as RAISED from THE DEAD. Thus these young converts were filled with joy—being raised from the dead, and in God the Father (See chap. 1). As we may imagine, these newly converted heathen were sorely perplexed at the death of the body. Well, this passage is evidently written to show them the resurrection of the saints who sleep in Jesus—that they will lose nothing, but be raised first; then we who are alive and remain—changed in a moment, as noticed in 1 Corinthians 15. And then a new fact is revealed—we shall be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air. Now this may take place before any of the events which have to be fulfilled: yea, we shall find this event is the very first that will take place; and therefore the last elect soul being brought to God, may take place whilst you read this paper. No person can quote me a single verse, which has to be fulfilled, before the sleeping and living saints, shall be caught up to meet Christ.

Let me give a plain illustration. Suppose Rotherham were in rebellion against Her Majesty, just as the world is in rebellion against Christ. Her Majesty makes known that she is coming in judgment, with her whole army, to destroy Rotherham. But there are a hundred royalists in the town. She sends word to them that they shall meet her at Derby—shall be taken by the Midland Rail, to meet her, and be with her at Derby; and then shall take place the day of vengeance on Rotherham. That, as the hour is uncertain when Her Majesty shall come by express from Euston Square to Derby, the royalists are to be waiting for a telegraphic message, at any moment, to meet her. Now many things might have to take place at Rotherham before Her Majesty actually entered the town—digging of trenches, cannonading the place, and so forth. In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ is really coming in judgment to this earth, which once murdered, and still rebels against Him. Every child of God on earth is a royalist, and every royalist of Christ shall be caught up to meet Christ in the air when He comes. Then begins the day of vengeance on this doomed age. Now if this be so, we should expect the Spirit of God, having made known this new fact, of believers being caught up to meet Christ; then to speak of this day of the Lord, which shall follow that event, the taking of the Church to be ever with the Lord. And this is exactly what He does do (1 Thess. 5). As the believer's hope is to be caught up to meet Christ, there is no need of writing on times and seasons. In fact there are no dates of Scripture that refer to this event (the moment of taking the saints) at all. All dates refer to Israel. "For yourselves know perfectly, that THE DAY of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and ye shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that THAT DAY should overtake you as a thief," and so forth. Thus this day of destruction and vengeance is introduced in dark contrast with the bright and blessed hope of the Church. The Church may be taken at any moment. THEN sets in the day of vengeance. The acceptable year of the Lord shall close; the day of vengeance begin (Isa. 61). Seeing this, how earnest the apostle was in prayer: "And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto THE COMING of our LORD JESUS CHRIST" (1 Thess. 5:23). We find persecution and tribulations soon overtaking these dear young converts, and to add to their deep distress, deceivers come, as though sent by the apostle, to tell them the DAY of the Lord was come. Their trouble and sorrow seemed to favor the report. They seemed to have been

greatly shaken by this stratagem of Satan.

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written to deliver them from this mistake and sorrow. Instead of the coming of the Lord being a day of trouble to them, the apostle says, “And to you who are troubled, REST WITH US; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels” (2 Thess. 1:7). So far from the world persecuting you in the day of vengeance, you shall rest with us, caught up; as he had taught them. Flaming “vengeance shall be taken on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Punished with everlasting destruction from His presence, “When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, (because our testimony was believed,) in that day” (2 Thess. 1:10). Still further to assure them, he says, “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand” (2 Thess. 2:1-2).

To return to the illustration. Suppose, before the royalists were called out of Rotherham to meet Her Majesty at Derby, a panic were to take place amongst them, by a report that the day of vengeance was come on Rotherham, and the cannonade about to open—an officer of Her Majesty were to write and say, I beseech you, all ye friends of the Queen, by the certainty of her coming first, and your being gathered together to her, do not be afraid. Cannot you depend on Her Majesty’s word? Not a cannonball shall be shot, before you are happy with her at Derby. Just in this manner did Paul comfort and assure the panic-stricken converts at Thessalonica. Two things were certain before the great and terrible day of the Lord—His coming for them, and their gathering to Him, as taught them in the first epistle.

Oh! could one think it possible, as we walk the streets, and watch the busy crowd, that destinies so vastly opposite await that crowd—the believer to be caught up to meet the Lord, (perhaps this very day), the unbeliever to be left to the fierceness of that day of vengeance.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 we have some of the terrible features of the end of this age. “The falling away first.” However sadly the professing church has departed, yet what will it be when the real Church of God is taken up! The full character of this falling away is described in Revelation 17. One terrible feature is the revelation of the wicked one, “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” (Rev. 17:4). Some, not observing that this fearful character appears on the closing scene of human wickedness, after the true Church is taken up to be with the Lord, have thought this man of sin is Popery, or the Pope. But do not you see this passage says, the man of sin shall sit IN THE TEMPLE of God. Now God never has, and never will have, a temple built on earth in any place except Mount Zion, or Mount Moriah—the place in which he appeared to Abraham. But that temple is now destroyed. It must, then, be rebuilt, as many scriptures show it will. And the terrible man of sin is evidently one of Daniel’s people, that is, a Jew— who shall come in his own name—whom the Jews shall receive (John 5:43).

As Satan entered into Judas, so will he enter into this son of perdition. I cannot, then, allow St. Peter’s at Rome to be the temple of God; neither can the Pope be this man of sin. Daniel plainly describes him as the wicked Jewish king at the time of the end: “And the king shall do according to his will; and be shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.” We all know the Pope is not the King of the Jews. It is quite clear that all this is Jewish, and cannot take place whilst the Spirit and the Church are here. As Paul had well taught these converts, he reminds them how he had told them, “And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time.”

“The mystery of iniquity doth already work”—the leaven foretold in Matthew 13 “Only He who now letteth (or hindereth) will let until He is taken away.” But, oh! what will it be when the Spirit of God is taken, and the Church caught up to meet the Lord? “And then shall that wicked one be revealed.” And, now, how clearly this proves this wicked one is not Popery, for it is he “whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.” Popery, and the whole of the ecclesiastical apostacy, will be destroyed by the ten kings (Rev. 17:16). But this wicked one “is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders.” The present work of Satan, in leading men to have to do with devils, and familiar spirits, by table-turning and the like, may be preparing the way. But these terrible events cannot possibly take place during this day of gospel grace. For in those days of darkness, God will send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, that they may all be damned. This will be assuredly the case when this day of mercy closes. God will arise and shake terribly the earth. “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion;” that is, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. Man is damned because he receives not the truth. These are God’s words as to the end of the present age. Fellow-believers, we are saved “because God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13). Oh! it is this that makes the coming of the Lord so precious—God’s eternal love. The apostle closes the subject in this epistle with these words, “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5).

Still, whether writing to an assembly, or to an individual saint, with the apostle it is the great practical truth. In fact, just as opposite to modern thoughts of men as possible. With men, the appearing of Christ is the least practical,—their most distant thought. With the apostle, it is the great practical truth—the ever-present theme of hope. He says to his son Timothy, after telling him of the sad departure and iniquity of the professing church in the last days, his concern for him was, “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and so forth (1 Tim. 6:14-16). And again, though misjudged and forsaken, and fully aware of the terrible character of these last days, yet what was the stay of his heart—”Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not unto me only, but unto all them that love His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

And again, writing to Titus, he says, “For the grace of God that BRINGETH salvation hath appeared to all men.” Ah! this is very precious. God does not expect to find anything, except sin and misery, in a poor sinner. But grace bringeth. Christ has died. Salvation is all of grace: that gives all and asks for nothing. Then the effect of this grace is to teach us holiness of life in every way, “LOOKING FOR that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Men now look for death; and so “it is appointed unto men once to die and after death the judgment.” But how blessed the contrast, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:27-28). Have you, my reader, this unspeakable consolation, that Christ has once borne your sins on the cross, and consequently, that He having borne the full judgment due to you once, there can be no more condemnation to you? And that He has made full atonement is proved, in that God hath raised Him from the dead. Then you are justified in Him, the risen Christ, from all things; yea, so justified that God says He will remember your sins and iniquities no more. Then how can you be judged for your sins again! Impossible, unless Christ has died in vain. Oh, what blessed, settled peace this gives to the long-perplexed soul!

But you ask, Shall we not all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? We shall do so. Yes, it is most happy for us who live in a world where the nearer a man lives to God the more is he misjudged and hated Yes, I say, it is most blessed that we shall soon stand before the Beemah or seat of Him who will reward every man according to his works. Yes, whilst the whole question of sin, and judgment due to sin, has been eternally settled by the blood of the Lamb; yet He who gave His blood for us, has promised that the gift of a cup of cold water shall not lose its reward. “To them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin”—no question of sin then, but—“unto salvation.” What encouragement to confidence and patience this gives. “For yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37).

Indeed nothing gives the soul more quiet patience, in the midst of sore trial and temptation, than this blessed hope, “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Be ye also patient; stablish your heart; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7-8). “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). “Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13). “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4).

Now, is it not strange that, with Scripture so full of this precious subject, men should say it is a dark, mysterious, bewildering subject, and that those do well who never look into it? What God says is this, “We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” Men would say our reasoning on the future is light. God says it is all darkness. Men say prophecy is all darkness. God says it is a light. But, alas! men will even go so far as to say, “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Peter 3:1-15). In this chapter we have a glorious view of the whole future in a general way, right onward to the creation of new heavens and a new earth—more in reference to the world, than the Church.

One thing is very manifest in all these words of the Spirit of God—the coming of the Lord is not looked at as a mere doctrine. It is either a blessed hope—that is, JESUS HIMSELF is presented as the object of the heart’s utmost desire; or a terrible fact, fast approaching to a doomed world. Of the former, we have a sweet example in the next words before us, “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” (1 John 3:2-3). Ah! it is not he that believeth this doctrine—our precious Lord claims the heart. Oh! is this the one desire and hope of my reader’s heart — to be like Him, to see Him as He is? Then sure it is sweet “to ABIDE in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28). Surely nothing can have a more purifying effect upon the believer, than his constant looking, longing, desiring, the coming of his precious Lord.

And as to the fact of judgment on an ungodly world, even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all,” and so forth (Jude 14). And how solemn are those words, “Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen” (Rev. 1:7).

In the seven addresses to the churches, these are searching words in the midst of much outward profession—”HOLD FAST TILL I COME” (Rev. 2:25). And again, “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I WILL COME on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I WILL COME upon thee” (Rev. 3:3). And again, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11). Woe be to the carnal worldly professor, who sets light by these solemn warnings, so suited to the state of the Church, during its sevenfold history, of the things that are now. In Revelation 4, things are revealed that will take place after these “I will show thee things that must be hereafter,” or after these (Rev. 4:1). And then, in blissful vision, in Revelation 4 and 5, the redeemed are seen gone from the earth, and seated around the glorified Lamb.

Revelation 6 to 19 contain the words of the Spirit of God as to the end of the present age, the Church being at that time taken to be with the Lord. Then sets in the great and terrible day of the Lord God Almighty. Peace is taken from the earth that they should kill one another (Rev. 11:4). Who can describe the terrors of that fearful day!

I do not go into the detail of the woes and judgments of this day of vengeance, answering to all the prophets have said, and all the passages we have read, in the words of Jesus, as to this time of great tribulation, such as never was—no, and never will be again. More gifted servants of the Lord have written on these things. I would refer the reader to the Bible Treasury and other tracts by the same publisher.

I may just remark, in perfect keeping with every other part of Scripture, the whole scene becomes Jewish in character during this day of wrath. Satan is cast down to the earth in Revelation 12 and persecutes the Jewish remnant. In Revelation 13 Satan is worshipped, and the head of the Roman Empire, to whom Satan gives his power, is worshipped (Rev. 13:3-8). In Revelation 17 the ecclesiastical apostacy, having lost her temporalities in the empire, now in her last most blasphemous character, sits upon the beast; that is, guides the imperial head in its last acts of wickedness. The Roman Empire which was, and is not, shall again appear in its most terrible character. Ten kings are seen confederate with the imperial head; and as England was one part of the empire, when it was, so assuredly shall it be again. It would seem, however, not by conquest; for the ten kings or kingdoms give their power to the beast. The reconstructed empire for a time carries the whore; but being infidel at heart, throws her off, and the ten kingdoms which will exist in that day “hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire” (Rev. 16). Revelation 18 is occupied with a description of her burning.

The Church having been with the Lord from Revelaton 6 now returns with the Lord in Revelation 19. The full number of the first resurrection being completed in the beginning of Revelation 20, then takes place the millennium, or thousand years’ rest, with Christ. The rest of the dead live not until this thousand years’ rest is completed. During this thousand years, every promise of blessing to this earth will be fulfilled—Satan bound—sin not allowed, but immediately judged.

Then comes the end. Satan is loosed a little while; and then the great judgment of the dead takes place (Rev. 20:11-15). And this over, the eternal state of inexpressible blessedness sets in—new heavens and new earth,

Where God shall shine in light divine,In glory everlasting.

I will conclude with the last closing sounds of the words of God on this solemn subject: “Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Rev 22:7). “And behold I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his

work shall be” (Rev 22:12). “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

C. S.

Pamphlets, Rest, the Well, and the River, The

In connection with what our brother has said on Matthew 18:20, I would like to ask you to turn for a moment to the words of Jesus in Matthew 11: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” We thus hear Him speaking, first to the Father, and then to us. His tender heart was grieved by the unbelief of the privileged cities of Galilee. And does He not feel now the unbelief and rejection all around — yea, and all that we are called to pass through at this very time?

How true it is that the unspeakable privilege of being gathered to His name, to Himself, is hid from the wise and prudent, and the Father hath revealed it unto babes! “No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” Now, is it not blessed to see how the Son thanks the Father for having revealed these things to babes? Having done this, He now speaks to us.

I know these loving words of Jesus are much used in the Gospel to weary sinners. Are they not equally true to weary saints? You say, I am so weary with all the strife, and division, and contention — so many speaking such perverse things! Does not our Jesus know it all? Yes, He knows all that Satan has done, and can do, to scatter those whom the Father hath gathered to His name; and, He knows the weariness and perplexity of many so dear to Him.

What does He say to them — to us? He says, “Come unto Me.” He knows the labor and burden of spirit, and He says, “I will give you rest.” He who gathered us at first from every sect still says, “Come unto Me.” We have heard Him giving thanks to the Father; now He says to us, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” What words are these even to us at this time, in the midst of an unbelieving and distracted Christendom! Very separating, as well as comforting, are those words of Jesus, “Come unto Me.”

There are three things the Lord presses upon me connected with His present thoughts and testimony — the Rest, the Well, and the River. We have looked a little at the first. We cannot be of service in the testimony of Christ, unless we are at perfect rest in His own dear presence. There we ever give thanks The greater the efforts of Satan to disturb and destroy, the more we discover the ever-loving care of Jesus, and enjoy His presence. As a dear afflicted sister told me a few weeks ago, she would not have been without all her afflictions and tears, because of the tenderness of that heart, and the softness of His hand, that had wiped them all away. Oh, what a contrast to the wise and prudent, even of the professing church, is the happy peace of the babes who know and rest in His unchanging love! This is just what we need at this time, in meekness and lowliness to learn of Him. He who gathered us long ago still says, “Come unto Me.” Talk of all being over! beloved brethren, this path shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day. Have we not found it so? Is not the presence of the Lord in the midst of those gathered unto Him as deep a reality as at the first? There we still find rest to our souls. Surely, if this suits His heart and the Father’s, it suits ours.

We will now come to the well. Turn to John 4:14: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

How is it that there is often so little blessing amongst us when we come together? Is it not that we ignore this scripture, and come as empty vessels to be filled? Does the Lord teach us that, having the Holy Spirit in us, we are still empty, thirsty vessels? Is it not a wonderful thing for our bodies to be the temples of the Holy Spirit? What a contrast is an empty vessel and a springing well — “springing up into everlasting life”! Can there be lack of blessing where this is known and believed? There is nothing like it on earth. The Holy Spirit so satisfying the heart with Christ, that we never thirst for aught beside joy and blessing, ever fresh, never stagnant —“a well of water springing up.” Is not this the same as fifty years ago, or in Acts 4? while ever valuing ministry, let us not come as leaky vessels, needing a man to fill us up. Oh, let us remember the lesson of the well — ever fresh, ever springing up into everlasting life.

Now let us come to the river. If we have learned of Him, and are in that lowly state of soul to enjoy the unspeakable rest of His own presence; and if we know the Holy Spirit abides in us, a well of living water; if we have thus come to Jesus, as saints gathered to Him, having found that nothing that is of man can long satisfy; if we have drunk in His presence, He now says a wonderful thing: “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). If a well is ever springing up, it must flow over somewhere. Jesus says, “SHALL FLOW rivers of living water.” How little have we awoke to this! Have we not almost forgotten it? He knows the state of this barren, thirsty land around us, and He says to each one who has found rest, and has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, that he shall be a river; yea, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

May each beloved brother be a river. Remember, it is not ourselves, but the Holy Spirit, of which He spake -all mere human ministry, however polished and exact, is only like ice. These scriptures have a special voice to us now. Have we not been too much limited, occupied with ourselves, and that as empty, rather than entering into the wondrous truths of the rest, the well, and the river? Rest to those gathered to Him is as real now, in the midst of the raging tempest of Satan’s hatred, as it was in the beginning. The Holy Spirit abides to the end, and the rivers of blessing of living water still flow to a lost and guilty world.

But from all we see, and hear, and learn from the word, would not the Lord have those rivers of blessing flow out to the whole church of God? Having learned rest in Jesus, and the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, may He be graciously pleased to use us to others, and to Him be all praise. It is a matter of immense importance, when sent to any given place, to seek to be a river to every child of God in that town or village. And then, in the boundless love of God, to seek to reach every sin-burdened soul in the district. Too often we think merely of ourselves.

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