

# THE LORD'S COMING AND KINGDOM

## THE HOPE OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

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DISTRACTED by the many and conflicting voices of the professedly Christian world, earnest minds often anxiously inquire, Which of all these voices tell 'the truth as it is in Jesus?' To such inquirers we would suggest the idea—'the nearer the fountain, the purer the stream.' Surely that faith taught by the Lord and his apostles, and heartily cherished by their immediate converts, must be the purest and safest. True, we hear much of 'advanced religious thought,' in our day; and it is common to meet with the sentiment, uttered with all the assurance of an axiom, that a religion which suited the generations of bye-gone times is not adapted to the enlightened minds of the 19th century; that the advanced condition of society requires 'a higher faith' than that which animated and solaced the pious minds of olden time.

Plausible though such a sentiment may seem, it is utterly fallacious, and strikes at the root of a *Revealed religion*. The way of salvation made known by the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles is the only safe way; and it is at the peril of his eternal salvation that any one alters or conforms 'the faith once for all delivered to the saints.' No one would be allowed to interpret any legislative enactment in a sense different from that in which it was first used. Men may think the law unsuitable, and seek to have it repealed; but they cannot acknowledge its authority, and yet apply its language in a sense different from that which it was meant to express at the first. And the law of God is perfect; the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles are final. To say that they are capable of improvement, is at once to strike at the root of their authority; and if man's judgment is to become the rule of his conduct, we shall have as many modes of conducting ourselves in this life, and in relation to the age to come, as there are varieties and processes of human thought and induction.

Suppose our inquiry related to a people who had become extinct,

the manner in which we would proceed to arrive at a knowledge of their religious belief would be to read their authoritative religious books. Well, in the Acts of the Apostles, the Gospels, and the Letters to the Churches, we have the only sure data by which to arrive at correct conclusions regarding what those early Christians believed. It is a long time since then, and religious belief has undergone various changes.

If you read the Acts, and the Epistles, where the faith of believers is continually alluded to in an incidental manner, you will arrive at a certain knowledge of the peculiarities of their faith, and distinguish how much it differs from or agrees with that which is now the common faith of 'Christendom.'

We wish to call the reader's attention to some strongly marked features of the faith of those Christians who lived in apostolic times, which stand out prominently and in contrast to what is commonly believed at present; and the first point to which we direct attention is—*That the return in person of the Lord Jesus Christ, from heaven to earth, was earnestly desired, expected, and waited for by them.*

While the wonder-stricken apostles were looking steadfastly toward heaven after their ascending Lord, two celestial messengers stood by them in white apparel, and addressed them in the following terms:—'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven'—(Acts i. 11). Henceforth the return of Jesus to this earth became the burden of the apostles' doctrine, and the hope and expectation of the early believers.

Judging from the purport of the bulk of the theological treatises and pulpit discourses of the present day, one would hardly expect that in the New Testament epistles, and the Revelation to John, the Second Coming is mentioned, or alluded to, not fewer than 68 times. Yet such is the case.

It is not, however, simply from the frequency of reference to this grand event, that its importance in the estimation of the apostles and the early believers appears, but also from the earnest and glowing language in which it is invariably mentioned. Thus, Paul, in his letter to the saints at Rome, indicates the intense desire of himself, and of those to whom he was writing, in the following stirring and graphic language:—'I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us; for the earnest expectation of the creature

waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only they, but ourselves also, WHO HAVE THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, even *we* groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of our body'—(Rom. viii. 18-23). The same writer commences his letter to the church at Corinth by expressing his thankfulness to God on their account, because they came behind in no gift, *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 'who,' says he, 'shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ'—(1 Cor. i. 7, 8).

Writing to the Philippians, he thus expresses his hope and theirs: "Our conversation is in heaven, 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 own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself"—(Phil. iii. 20, 21).

In exhorting the brethren at Colosse to 'mortify' the desires of the flesh, he employs this motive: 'For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory'—(Col. iii. 3-5).

Referring, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, to the result of his preaching among them, he congratulates them that it was such as to lead them to 'turn from dumb idols to serve the living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come'—(1 Thes. i. 9, 10). And the object of his earnest prayer that 'the Lord would make them to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men,' was 'to the end that he might stablish their hearts in holiness before God, even the Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints'—(chap. iii., 12, 13). And when, in the same letter, he administers consolation concerning those who had fallen asleep, the same events—the return of the Lord, and its concomitant results—are the burden of his theme. 'I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others that have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent—[that is, go before]—those 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 who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord'—(1 Thes. iv. 14-17). To this gathering together of the resurrected and transformed saints to the Lord Jesus, Paul also refers in the 15th chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, in these sublime and soul-stirring utterances: 'Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we—[that is, we who are alive]—shall be changed. . . . Thou shalt be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.'

The second letter to the Thessalonians opens with words of encouragement to the believers under the severe tribulation they were called on to suffer for the truth's sake. It is a promise of 'rest'—rest to the troubled; a rest which the righteous Lord would award to them 'when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of His Son, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all those that believe'—(2 Thes. i. 7-10).

When near the close of his career, we find the same apostle committing a solemn charge to Timothy, his own son in the faith, which he introduces and enforces in these terms: 'I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word,' &c. 'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; 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 to me only, but to all them also that *love his appearing*'—(2 Tim. iv. 6, 7). 'The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men,' says the same writer in his letter to Titus, 'hath appeared; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ'—(Titus ii. 12, 13). It is thus evident, that the second appearing of the Lord Jesus was a subject of the greatest moment to the apostle Paul, and to the churches of the saints to which his letters are addressed.

The same fact characterises the letters of the other apostles preserved to us in the New Testament. Hear James: 'Be patient, brethren, *unto the coming of the Lord*. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh'—(James v. 7, 8). Hear Peter: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto *salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*; wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold trials; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, *at the appearing of Jesus Christ*. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you, *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*'—(1 Peter i. 3-7, 13).

Listen to John: 'And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming.' 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear [that is, it is not manifested] 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 one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure'—(1 John iii. 28; iv. 2).

And the latest utterance on record, from the Lord himself to his beloved disciple in Patmos, is this: 'Surely I come quickly;' to which the venerable apostle responds: 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

This constant waiting and watching for the coming of the Lord was based on the fact that *they did not know how soon he might appear*. The Lord himself had taught them that he would come suddenly, like the lightning's flash. 'As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come' (Matt. xxiv. 36-44; Mark xiii. 32-37).

Such an attitude is very different from that encouraged by the prevalent notion, that the Lord is not to come from heaven the second time till after the Millennium; for if so, why watch for it?

There is one passage which is often cited against the idea we are

now illustrating—namely, 2 Thes. ii. 1–12: ‘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 be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 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. Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’

One writer on the second coming of the Lord,\* avers that the apostle here ‘fearlessly crushes’ the idea that ‘the day of Christ was at hand,’ and that no ‘pre-millennialist’ would employ the language of the apostle, as he would be afraid of destroying the possibility of watching—(pp. 42, 43). Now whatever be the meaning of the apostle’s language here, it is a fact that he tells the Christians at Rome that ‘the day is at hand;’ and, that this idea was not peculiar to him, but was taught also by the other New Testament writers, we have already had ample proof. Can it be that the apostle here seeks to ‘destroy’ what he and his fellow apostles commonly taught? No such thing. The mistake arises from a wrong translation of the Greek word rendered ‘at hand.’

The term employed here is never in any other instance rendered ‘at hand’ by our translators; and in several instances they render it ‘present,’ in opposition to ‘future,’ or coming.’ Observe its

\* ‘Christ’s Second Coming; will it be Pre-millennial?’ By the Rev. David Brown, D.D., formerly of St James’s Free Church, Glasgow, now of Aberdeen. [Dr Brown has been replied to by Dr H. Bonar, whose ‘Prophetical Landmarks’ we cordially recommend to the reader’s perusal.]

use in the following passages :—‘ For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things PRESENT, nor things to come ’—(Rom. viii. 38). ‘ Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things PRESENT, or things to come, all are yours ’—(1 Cor. iii. 22). ‘ I suppose, therefore, that this is good for the PRESENT distress ’—(1 Cor. vii. 26). ‘ Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this PRESENT evil world, according to the will of God and our Father ’—(Gal. i. 4). ‘ Which was a figure for the time then PRESENT, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience ’—(Heb. ix. 9). ‘ Present,’ not ‘ at hand,’ is evidently its meaning here. The sense of the passage and the uniform testimony of the apostles demand this. So rendered, the passage runs thus : ‘ We beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of the Lord, and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by letter as from us, that the day of Christ is present ;’ that is, ‘ already come.’

It was not to crush their hopes, or allay their ‘ feverish enthusiasm,’ regarding the speedy appearing of their glorified Redeemer, that the apostle wrote these words of caution, but contrariwise, to prevent their being ‘ shaken in mind ’—to quiet their fears that the day of the Lord was already present. Nothing short of the greatest misconception of the earnest desire, hope, and expectation of the early Christians, could lead any one for a moment to imagine that the church of the Thessalonians had any reason to be ‘ troubled ’ because the day of Christ was at hand ; for was it not at ‘ that day ’ that the holy apostle expected to receive from his Saviour’s hands ‘ a crown of righteousness ’—a crown which shall be awarded not to him alone, but to all those also who love that Saviour’s appearing ?

But, on the other hand, the notion which some men appear to have been at pains to teach the brethren at Thessalonica—the notion that the day of Christ had already come, while the brethren who had fallen asleep had not awaked, but were slumbering still, and they themselves yet unchanged, and all things remained as formerly—afforded cause for their being troubled and shaken in mind : it is to remove this idea, or to prevent its being believed, that the apostle employs the language in question.

Viewed in the light of the context, this passage is in perfect harmony with the others we have cited.

Another strongly marked feature in the faith of the early disciples was, That *they looked for the return of the Lord Jesus to reign upon earth, along with his saints, over restored Israel and all nations.* The mass of professing Christians believe in a second coming of Christ. They believe that he is coming to sit at a great assize of the living and the dead of all ages, and to apportion to each reward or punishment, and that then the globe upon which we live is to be consumed into ashes and smoke, and so pass away. But those early Christians were taught, and they believed, that the kingdom of God would be set up on earth, and that Jesus was coming back, not merely to apportion to each man his reward or punishment, but to reign as sole monarch of the world, over all peoples, nations, and languages (Dan. vii.)

In Acts i. 3, we are informed that Jesus was with the apostles forty days after his resurrection, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. We call attention to this fact on account of its bearing on a very common assertion by many in the present day—namely, That the apostles, during the Lord's ministrations among them, were the victims of Jewish prejudices, and that their expectations that the Messiah would establish his kingdom among them, and that Israel would be the chief nation on earth, to whom all other nations were to be subject, was a delusion, a carnal hope. Had this been so, we have reason to expect that the Lord would have put them right during these forty days' instruction regarding the kingdom of God. He did enlighten them on some points on which they were mistaken. For instance, when on the way to Emmaus, the two disciples told him that it was three days since Jesus had been dead and buried, and that they had trusted 'that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.' Jesus instructed them from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, that Christ must needs suffer, be put to death, and rise again from the dead. If he enlightened them on this point, it is reasonable to think that, if they had any mistaken notions on the kingdom of God, he would have put them right on that matter also; and we actually find, that during these forty days of his appearance to them, all that he is said to have spoken to them about was 'the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.' Surely, now that he had risen from the dead, and called to their recollection those things he had previously spoken to them, if they had one error within their minds regarding the kingdom, he must have dissipated it by his instructions. Keeping your finger on that circumstance, notice the sixth verse: 'When they, therefore, were come together, they asked



of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' Those who repudiate the Jewish hope as carnal, would say that such language betrayed a continuance of that hope in the apostles. They are still speaking of the restoration of Israel. But this was said after the Christ had instructed them for the space of forty days. Did Jesus correct any false impression about this? Did he say to them: 'Ah, you are still labouring under that old Jewish delusion. My kingdom is far superior to anything on earth?' No; but he corrects one part of their question. Observe the question. It is not about the *nature* of the kingdom; it is in regard to *the time* of its setting up. They were wrong in asking about the *time*; and therefore he corrects them; but they were right about the *kingdom*—right about its restoration to Israel. Had they any authority for speaking about the kingdom being restored to Israel? Yes, they had the very best authority. God had promised it, in language as plain as any language in the statutory law-book of Britain. 'In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth even for ever. And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong-hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem'—(Micah iv. 6-8).

Jesus appeared in Israel preaching 'the gospel of the kingdom' (Matt. iv. 23); and he himself declared that to preach that kingdom he had been sent. 'I must preach the kingdom of God in other cities also, for therefore am I sent'—(Luke iv. 43). When he sent forth his disciples to preach, the subject of their proclamation was 'the kingdom of God'—(Matt. x. 7; Luke x. 9). Often had this kingdom been the subject of private converse between the Lord and these disciples. They had spoken of sitting at his right hand and his left in the kingdom of God; and of who should be greatest in that kingdom. He had promised to drink wine with them in the kingdom of God—(Matt. xxvi. 39); yet, while from the time he called on them to follow him, till he was taken up from them into heaven, all that we have recorded of them shows that they understood 'the kingdom of God' to be what the language of the prophets, taken in its plain, obvious sense, represents it to be; in no instance do we find Jesus correcting that impression; but, on the contrary, using language which was well fitted to strengthen

their expectations and hopes regarding the *nature* and *place* of that kingdom.

Are we wrong, then, in affirming that these hopes and expectations were correct? Nay, rather, is not the rashness with those who affirm the contrary?

It is contended, however, that the apostles had their minds enlightened about the kingdom, after they received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; let us, then, refer to their preaching after that event. 'Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope; because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to his flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses'—(Acts ii. 22–32). This language was addressed to Israelites. It is language with which they were familiar, and stated, without any reservation, that Christ was 'raised up' for the express purpose of sitting on the throne of David. The phrase, 'David's throne,' was current amongst the people of Israel, and equivalent to 'the throne of Israel.' Take your Concordance, turn up the 'throne of David,' and you will find it applied to the throne of Israel hundreds of years after David had fallen asleep. Its meaning is tied down to the throne of God in Israel.

Thus, of Solomon it is said that he 'sat upon the throne of David his father'—(1 Kings ii. 12, 24). There may appear nothing remarkable in the language as applied to Solomon, as he was

David's immediate successor; but what we call attention to is the fact that, more than 400 years afterwards, when a long succession of kings had occupied the same position, that throne was still called 'the throne of David.' In the book of Jeremiah we find these words: 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit *upon David's throne* . . . with drunkenness'—(Jer. xiii. 13). 'And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord. . . . Then shall there enter into the gates of the city kings and princes, sitting upon the throne of David'—(chap. xvii. 24, 25; see also xxii. 4, 30; xxxvi. 30). The meaning of the phrase, 'the throne of David,' is thus, by usage, equivalent to 'the throne of God over Israel;' and in all fairness we are bound to understand the apostle Peter as so applying it when he declared that God had raised up Christ to sit on David's throne.

How else, indeed, could the prediction be fulfilled, 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon *the throne of David*, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever?'—(Is. ix. 6, 7).

Did not the angel say to the mother of our Lord, before his birth, 'the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end?' And as Jesus has never yet sat on that throne, his return from the heavens is indispensable to his doing so. And so we find the Lord, in reference to the appearing of his kingdom, comparing himself to a nobleman who went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to *return*—(Luke xix. 11, 12). On another occasion, he plainly said: 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory'—(Matt. xxv. 31).

Peter, by the Holy Spirit, further testifies to the same truth: 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began'—(Acts iii. 19-21). Observe the phrase, 'the restitution of all

things,' in the 21st verse. This language is often perverted—taken out of the sentence, and made to express a meaning which the apostle never dreamt of. The Universalist, who believes that God will deliver all mankind from punishment, and bestow upon them a happy and eternal existence, uses this phrase as the denominative title of his belief. The apostle does not speak of a 'restitution of all things.' It is limited thus: 'The restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets, since the world began.' The apostle is speaking of the *times of restitution* as the time when God will send Jesus Christ. *Restoration* is the exact equivalent of *restitution*.\* It is at that time of restitution, or restoration, of those things of which the prophets have spoken from the earliest times, that God is to send Jesus Christ. The apostle does not say how long time was to elapse until these things were to begin; it might be near or far, for anything he says. But Jesus Christ is to remain in the heavens *until* these times begin; not until after they have run out. Until the Lord comes, nothing shall be done in the restoration of these things spoken of by the prophets. *He* is to gather the outcasts of Israel; *he* is to come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Modern theologians will have it, that the glorious future of the world spoken of by the prophets is to transpire *before* the second appearing of the Christ. Thus, Dr G. S. Burns, of the Cathedral Church, Glasgow, in a sermon preached by him in the Glasgow University on Jan. 22, 1871, exclaims: 'How mighty the work to be accomplished before the second advent!—how vast the machinery for preparing the way for the coming of the Son of man! There is the complete destruction of evil, and the final and universal enthronement of good; the emancipation of humanity from the

\* Some have erroneously translated the term here used (*apokatastasis*) 'fulfilment,' or 'accomplishment,' and made use of the translation to support the idea that the heavens are to retain the Lord Jesus Christ till all things spoken of by the prophets have been fulfilled. The translation, however, is as unwarrantable as the idea is unscriptural. The Lexicon meaning of the word is 'a restoration to a past state;' and Greek writers use it to signify the recovery of a dislocated or fractured limb, the restoration of an original form of government; and in astronomy, the same term would denote the return of a planet to a given point in its orbit.

In the New Testament, this is the only instance where the word occurs as a noun, but the verb is often used in the sense of 'restore.' Thus: 'Jesus saith to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole as the other'—(Matt. xii. 13). 'The blind man's eyesight was restored, and he saw every man clearly'—(Mark viii. 25). 'Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'—(Acts i. 6). 'I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner'—(Heb. xiii. 19).

thralldom of death and sin; and the extinction, throughout the universe, of all that would hurt or destroy'—(*Christian News*, Jan. 22, 1871). The teaching of the Lord and his apostles is very different. Jesus compares the condition and fate of the masses on the earth, at the time of his second coming, to that of the contemporaries of Noah and his family. 'As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be'—(Matt. xxiv. 37-39). 'Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived'—(2 Tim. iii. 13). 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation'—(2 Pet. iii. 3, 4). When the Son of God receives the nations for his inheritance, they will be so incorrigibly wicked, that he will 'break them in pieces like a potter's vessel'—(Ps. ii. 9).

Ah! vain man would be a god, and do all things for himself. He will submit to anything, however great and difficult, rather than submit to take salvation as God's free gift. Man would save the world through his own instrumentality, would make it all that the prophets have predicted, and *then*, after all things are right, the Lord may come. Dear reader, the salvation of the world entirely rests on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is another idea commonly believed—That the church of Jesus Christ is the kingdom of which he is the king. In a sense, Jesus may be said to be the king of that church; but not in the sense in which the terms are used in Scripture. The church is subject to Christ as its Head, but not as the subjects of his kingdom. The church was promised the kingdom for an inheritance. 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'—(Luke xii. 32)—not to give them the church. He promised to the twelve apostles that, 'in the regeneration, when the Son of man would sit on the throne of his glory, they should also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'—(Matt. xix. 28). So far from the church being the kingdom, we find the apostles telling the Christians that 'through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom'—(Acts xiv. 22). In writing to the church at Thessalonica, the apostle expresses his intense desire that they might be worthy of the kingdom of God for which they also suffered—(2 Thes. i. 5); and, in the letters to

Corinth, Galatia, and Ephesus, he enumerates certain vices, regarding which he says : 'Those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God'—(1 Cor. vi. 9, 10 ; Gal. v. 19-21 ; Eph. v. 5). The inheritance was *future*. Peter desires for the faithful, that an 'abundant entrance may be given unto them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'—(2 Pet. i. 11). And James says : 'God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him'—(James ii. 5). The Alpha and Omega holds out this to the church at Thyatira : 'He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron'—(Rev. ii. 26, 27)—language parallel to the second Psalm, where the Messiah is said to receive the nations for his inheritance. And another promise is : 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne'—(Rev. iii. 21). The prize shall be theirs when 'the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ'—(Rev. xi. 15).

'God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained.' Not after the fashion of our catechisms and creeds, but after the fashion of the 67th and 96th Psalms ; a judging that shall bring joy to the nations—one of so happy a character that all men shall rejoice because he comes. 'O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy ; for Thou shalt JUDGE the people righteously, and GOVERN the nations upon earth'—(Ps. lxxvii. 4). 'Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad ; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein ; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord ; for He cometh to JUDGE the earth ; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth'—(Ps. xcvi. 11-13). A very different scene this from the Day of Judgment depicted by painters and theologians. They confine the terms 'judge' and 'judgment' to the inflicting of punishment and conferring rewards. These are only particular forms of judging. In the Scriptures, the term 'judge' is used in the sense of 'rule,' or 'govern,' as is manifest from the quotations given above, and in many others which might be quoted ; as : 'He shall judge the people with righteousness, and the poor with judgment.' He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor'—(Ps. lxxii. 2, 4). 'He shall not judge after the sight

of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears ; but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth'—(Is. xi. 3, 4).

This was the kind of judging that the apostle had in his mind when he testified that God had appointed a day in which He would *judge* the world in righteousness by that man whom He had ordained, even Jesus, the King that would reign in righteousness; the effect of which reign being quietness and assurance for ever (Is. xxxiii. 1, 17). His kingdom is a universal one ; see the 72d Psalm. 'His name shall endure for ever ; his name shall be continued as long as the sun ; and men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call him blessed.'

How unlike the present is the time of which we read, when the nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares ! They never were so busy learning the art of war as they are now. We see men in the uniform of soldiers learning the art of war, not only in the ranks of the standing army, but industrious artisans, old and young, present the same appearance ; while vice, in many forms, and bold impiety, stalks abroad at noonday. When Christ reigns, he shall put an end to all this.

The Christ of God, the mighty Prince of Life,  
 Shall breathe upon the nations, and impart  
 Life to the dead, strong purpose to the faint ;  
 Infinite love and wisdom shall arrest  
 The work of ruin, and redeem the world  
 From sin's dire curse and man's oppressive rule,  
 Adorning earth with righteousness and peace.

And so it was that the early Christians looked and longed with 'earnest expectation' for the return of the Lord from heaven. Till then, 'the tabernacle of David' would remain broken down, and the promises made to the fathers remain unfulfilled. Upon that return depended their hope of resurrection, and eternal life, and glory. As the poor castaway upon his raft, on the wide and desolate ocean, looks eagerly for the sight of a friendly sail, so did they look, and long, and pray for the return of their absent Lord.

And so it was during the first three centuries of the Christian era. Then a new species of philosophy sprung up, which adapted the doctrines of Christ to the teaching of Plato.

How sadly different is the hope of the bulk of professing Christians now ! The theology of the present has so completely inverted the hope of the gospel, that *Death*—'the last enemy'—is made to take the place, in the believer's mind, of Him who is

coming to destroy it. For are we not taught that 'the souls of believers are, at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory?' What, then, has the Christian more to wish for? Whatever good the return of the Lord may do for others, it is of comparatively little moment to the believer, if it be true that, at death, his emancipated spirit wings its way to everlasting bliss! Surely that theology must be wrong which so manifestly differs from—nay, more, is so directly opposed to—the faith of those who first received the gospel of Christ.

Such are some of the prominent characteristics of the faith and hope of the first Christians. And just as the belief of professing Christians in our day differs from that of apostolic times, so far is it erroneous and unsafe. Reader, what is *your* hope? 'Once, in the end of the age, Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.' If you are to be saved, it must be through this One: by believing in him as God's Christ, the future King of Israel and all nations; and trusting in him as your Saviour, and submitting to him as your Lord. Even so shall you stand approved in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

W. LAING.

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