The Parousia of the Son of Man

ITS SUDDEN UNVEILING AND ILLUSTRIOUS APPEARING

By

REV. JOHN H. QERTER, D.D.

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PREFACE

The following chapters have grown out of a course of lectures delivered a few years ago before the students of the Missionary Training Institute of the Christian Alliance. While I am very far from supposing that I have, even approximately, exhausted the vast subject of our Lord's return, I have at least endeavored to give in a succinct form a clear survey of the most essential points connected with that great and glorious event. How far I have succeeded in my efforts I leave to the kind reader to decide. There is, however, one favor I must ask of him, that he peruse the following pages with his Bible in his hand, as I have not endeavored to make every research on his part superfluous. On the contrary, the purpose of these lines is also to animate to further and deeper studies of the all-important subject of the coming of the Son of Man.

The scriptural quotations are given in the language of the Revised Version as that in the most cases gives a more exact rendering of the original.
There are a few instances in which I feel bound to differ from widespread opinions, because from my earliest childhood I have been trained to bow only before the majesty and authority of the inspired words of the sacred Volume. These differences I have stated in a spirit of perfect charity to those that have been taught differently and teach otherwise. There is one common comfort and that is this, that the great hope and longing of the apostolic time as to Christ’s return is becoming more and more the moving power of Christian life and work in our days.

May He who “is” and “was” and “is coming” bless the efforts of His humble servant to His honor and glory!

New York, Nov., 1902. The Author.
INTRODUCTION

As to the Meaning of Terms.

It is of the utmost importance to obtain a correct idea of the meaning of those terms which Scriptures use in order to express the event of our Lord’s coming over again visibly from the world of glory to this earth of ours. Great confusion and misleading have been caused by not paying the requisite attention to the language of Scripture employed in connection with this all-important subject. In some cases the grammatical construction of the original has been set aside entirely, and the words have been perverted in order to express a pre-conceived, fond idea concerning the Advent of Christ. It is the author’s sincere desire to avoid this grave mistake. Let the Word of truth speak for itself.

Comparing the different designations of the glorious event, it will be noticed that Parousia is not only the most general, but also the most comprehensive and expressive term used. Considering all the passages in which it occurs, it will be found that two distinct ideas connect themselves with this word. The one is the idea of a coming over,
while the other is that of being present. Hence neither the translation “coming,” nor “presence” (R. V.) fully covers the original meaning. “Arrived presence” is a better rendering of the term, but could hardly be introduced into a version for the people. Christ’s coming will form an advent, an arrival, a coming to stay. His visible coming over is easily deduced from the accompanying circumstances, while the idea of His remaining present finds expression and support in the words of the Apostle. After he has described the Parousia of the Lord he continues, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thess. iv. 17; comp. John xii. 26; xiv. 3; xvii. 24; Rev. xxi. 3, 4; xxii. 3-5).

With reference to the various relations which Christ sustains toward His redeemed people His Parousia is that of “the Son of man” (Matt. xxiv. 27, 37, 39); or “of the Lord” (Ias. v. 7; I. Thess. iv. 15); or “of our Lord” (I. Thess. iii. 13; v. 23; II. Thess. ii. 1); or “of Christ” (II. Pet. i. 16; I. Cor. xv. 23; I. Thess. ii. 19).

The term Parousia bears a marked relation to the time immediately preceding it as well as to its momentary occurrence, and to the subsequent time.

Just preceding it the moral condition of the
world will be that of recklessness (Matt. xxiv. 38, etc.). The apostasy of the Church of God will be a general one (II. Thess. ii. 3; I Tim. iv. 1).

The Antichristian spirit will culminate in the personal appearance of the incarnation of the devil and his demoniacal work (II. Thess. ii. 3-11).

In the physical world extraordinary cosmic changes will herald the approaching Parousia (Matt. xxiv. 29; Rev. vi. 12-13; Isa. xiii. 10; Ezek. xxxii. 7; Joel ii. 3).

The Parousia itself shall be as quick and universal as the lightning, and as unexpected and sudden as the thief in the night (Matt. xxiv. 27, 43, etc.; II. Peter iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3, xvi. 15).

It will appeal effectively to the outward senses of all the inhabitants of the earth (I. Thess. iv. 16; Matt. xxiv. 31; Rev. i. 7).

It will pass off with all the splendor, glory and power heaven can command (Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7; Matt. xvi. 27; xxv. 31).

The effect of the Parousia will be most terrific on the wicked; but most cheering and elevating to the saints of God (Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. vi. 15-17; Luke xxi. 28; Rev. xix. 5-9).

The consequences of the Parousia will be:

(1) The raising of the dead, the changing of
The Parousia

the living, the gathering of both in the air with the Lord, and a glorious display of the same in the glory of the Lord (I. Cor. xv. 23, 52; I. Thess. ii. 19; iv. 16-17; II. Thess. ii. 1, etc.; Matt. xxiv. 31; I. Thess. iii. 13; Jude xiv.; Zech. xiv. 5; 1 John ii. 28).

(2) The destruction of Antichrist and his kingdom (II. Thess. ii. 8; Matt. xxv. 31, etc.).

From the foregoing it is apparent that the term Parousia covers all the various features which Scriptures connect with the glorious event of the return of Christ. Besides, it will have been noticed that all the different occurrences mentioned are inseparably connected with that certain event called Parousia which is to come about at a definite time-period, unknown to us. Hence they must not be separated from that event, nor ascribed to an imaginary one, said to occur at some other time.

A second term is Apokalypsis—Revelation. This term in general has reference to an unveiling or bringing to light what before was hidden. Its eschatological meaning shares in this ordinary sense. As the Son of man, since His ascension, is keeping Himself out of sight, His public, visible Parousia becomes an unveiling or a manifestation. Then the hidden Lord steps out into universal observation and
that in the manner described in connection with the term Parousia. Of these accompanying circumstances only the following are mentioned in connection with the term Revelation:

(1) The appearing of the Son of man with the angels of His power and glory (II. Thess. i. 7; comp. Luke ix. 26; Matt. xxiv. 31, xvi. 27; xxv. 31; Mark viii. 38).

(2) The same carelessness, as in the days of Noah and Lot, will prevail at the time when Christ is revealed, just as at His Parousia (comp. Luke xvii. 26-29 with Matt. xxiv. 28).

(3) The rejoicing of the saints with exceedingly great joy and anxious waiting for Him (I. Peter iv. 13; I. Cor. i. 7; comp. Luke xxi. 28).

(4) The vengeance and destruction that will befall the unbelievers on that great day of Revelation (II. Thess. i. 7-10; comp. Matt. xxiv. 30, 41, 51, xxv. 31, etc.; II. Thess. ii. 8).

(5) The public acknowledging and glorifying of the saints, just as at the Parousia (II. Thess. i. 10; I. Peter i. 7, 13; comp. Matt. xxiv. 31; I. Thess. iii. 13, 14; I. John ii. 28).

Now taking together these two terms, Parousia and Revelation, and comparing the different circumstances connected with these two terms, we must become convinced that both refer to one and the same event of the Lord's
coming. Otherwise they would designate two different occurrences at two different time-points, and yet happening under exactly the same accompanying circumstances.

A third term is *Epiphania*—Epiphany or Appearing. In accordance with the original meaning of the word (shining forth), it has reference to the glorious, effulgent breaking forth of the Lord in His heavenly glory. Just as the person of the exalted Christ is at present hid from our view, so is also His innate and surrounding glory. But when He will come again and be revealed that hidden glory and majesty will burst forth into the vastness of the space of the universe, so that it will become perceptible to the eye. This fact *epiphania* is expressing. In II. Timothy i. 10 “epiphany” refers to Christ’s coming in the flesh; through that event a new saving light bursts forth upon mankind, “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel” (Luke ii. 32). The second coming of Christ will be an epiphany of still greater magnitude.

In II. Thess. ii. 8 the Parousia of the Lord is expressly called “the epiphany of His Parousia.” The two terms therefore, are identical. This epiphany our Lord “will show in His own time” (I. Tim. vi. 14), just as the Master, in answer to a question of His disciples, says
with reference to His coming in general (Acts i. 7). In connection with the epiphany—the
great glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ is
mentioned (Titus ii. 13); the same is done with
reference to His Parousia (Matt. xvi. 27; xxv.
31; Mark viii. 38; Matt. xxiv. 30; Luke ix.
26; II. Thess. i. 7-10). The two terms must
therefore signify the same event.

There is still another term frequently used in
connection with the Lord’s coming, and that is
“day of the Lord,” or “day of Christ.” This ex-
pression, no doubt, has its origin in the Old
Testament term “day of Jehovah.” This was
to come with the Messianic time and bring
the final judgment upon hardened Israel as well
as upon the hostile Gentile nations, being ac-
 companied with terrible cosmic changes (Isa.
ii. 12, xiii. 6, 9; Ezek. xiii. 5, xxx. 3; Joel i.
15; ii. 1, 11; Amos v. 18, 20; Ob. xv; Zeph.
i. 14). But while the day of Jehovah, in har-
mony with the expressions “last days,” or “latter times” (Isa. ii. 2; Mic. iv. 1; comp. Acts
ii. 17; I. Peter i. 20; Neh. i. 2), covers the
entire Messianic period, the term “day of the
Lord” has always reference to that specific and
definite event which otherwise is called Parou-
sia or Revelation. Whenever a longer period
than the one expressed by “day of the Lord”
is meant, then the expression “days of Christ”
is used. Just as our Lord clearly distinguishes “the day of Noah” from “the days of Noah” and “the day of Lot” from “the days of Lot,” so also is the day of Christ clearly distinguished from the days of Christ. The days of Noah stretched over all his years preceding the flood; but his “day” began with the moment when he entered the ark of safety and the flood began its destructive work. During Lot’s years of sojournin in Sodom the people of that place grew in wickedness, but Lot’s “day” began with the moment when he was led out of the doomed city and the first flash of fire and brimstone descended from heaven (Luke xvii. 26-29). Thus it is clear that the singular “day” in both instances refers to a mere moment of time, while the plural “days” covers an indefinite period. The same is also the case with the expression “day of Christ” in distinction from “the days of Christ.” The latter designates an indefinite period of time, immediately preceding the Parousia of the Lord, when the same recklessness shall prevail. They are called so because they are directly fixed and measured off by His appearing in glory. They stand in a more conspicuous and closer relation to that eminent event than any other time ever has done (Luke xvii. 22-27, 31). But “the day of Christ” confines itself to
that lightning-like appearance of the Son of man, that will bring destruction upon the wicked world (Luke xvii. 24, 30, 31). In that day the carousing shall cease, but judgment shall set in. There is no indication anywhere that the day of the Lord shall extend over an indefinite period, much less over centuries, as has been asserted.

The idea of judgment is mostly connected with the term "day of Jehovah." It is therefore natural that the same idea should prevail in the New Testament expression "day of the Lord" and its synonyms. Thus it is "a day of visitation" (I. Peter ii. 12; Isa. x. 3); "a day of wrath" (Rom. ii. 5; Zeph. i. 15, 18, ii. 2, 3; Isa. xiii. 3; Ezek. vii. 19); "the great day" (Rev. vi. 17, xvi. 14; Jude 6; Acts ii. 20; Jer. xxx. 7; Joel ii. 11, 31; Zeph. i. 14; Mal. iv. 5); a "day of judgment" (Matt. x. 15, xi. 22, xii. 36; II. Peter iii. 7; I. John iv. 17; Rom. ii. 16).

This day will also be pre-eminently "the day of Christ," because He will judge on that day (Matt. vii. 22, 23); He will raise the dead (John v. 27, vi. 39, 40, 44, 54); and He will appear in the glory of His Father. It is therefore the day of our Lord (I. Cor. i. 8); of the Lord Jesus (II. Cor. i. 14); of Jesus Christ (Phil. i. 6); of the Son of man (Luke xvii,
34). The very fact that it is the day of our Lord Jesus Christ furnishes an exceedingly great comfort to His children, waiting for the appearing of that day. They know it will bring nothing to them but joy and happiness, because it will make an end of all opposition to Christ, the King, and His people.

The following features of the day of the Lord and its synonyms prove its identity with the terms Parousia and Revelation.

According to I. Corinthians i. 8 those waiting for the Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, He shall confirm unto the end, that they may be unreprovable in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle hopes that the Lord may establish the hearts of the Thessalonians unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the Parousia (I. Thess. iii. 12, 13). Consequently the three expressions refer to the same event of Christ's coming; compare also Philippians i. 10 with I. Thessalonians v. 23.

At the day of the Lord and the Parousia Paul expects to be able to glory in his readers (comp. II. Cor. i. 14; Phil. ii. 16 with I. Thess. ii. 19).

The Son of man shall be in His day as the "lightning when it lighteneth out of one part under heaven and shineth unto the other part
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under heaven” (Luke xvii. 24); just as it will be at Christ's Parousia (Matt. xxiv. 27).

Both, Parousia and day of the Lord, will come unexpectedly as “a thief in the night” (I. Thess. v. 2; II. Peter iii. 10 with Matt. xxiv. 27).

At the Parousia and the day of the Lord the saints are gathered with the Lord in the air (Comp. Matt. xxiv. 31; I. Thess. iv. 17 with II. Thess. ii. 1, 2).

Now, in the face of these and other overwhelming passages every one ought to be convinced that all these different terms designate but one event; an event that will not stretch over an indefinite period, but will be characterized by a surprisingly quick and decisive measure of time. The “lightning,” the “twinkling of an eye,” etc., indicate an unusually quick energy at work on that day.

In connection with the Parousia of our Lord there is still another term used which does not designate the return of Christ so much as some circumstances preceding that event. It is the term “tribulation.” It is applied to conditions of the saints as well as to those of the wicked world. There is, however, this marked difference: when it applies to the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ its meaning is invariably that of persecution, and distress resulting
therefrom. When applied to the enemies of the Lord and His kingdom, it presents to us the signification of judgment and penal visitations. Unfortunately this essential difference of meaning is largely overlooked, and on that account a great confusion of ideas has been caused.

A careful consideration of all the passages of the New Testament in which the expression occurs, convinces us that in general it denotes any kind of oppression, affliction and distress (Acts vii. 11; Rom. xii. 12; II. Cor. i. 4, 8; Mark iv. 17; John xvi. 21, etc). It is further noticed that the term “tribulation” has also a specific eschatological meaning which is applied to distressing circumstances of a different nature. In Matthew xxiv. 9-11, for example, it refers to the persecution of all the followers of Christ, connected with imprisonment and martyrdom, as they will be brought about by the rise of the antichristian spirit (comp. Rev. ii. 10; Matt. x. 17; John xvi. 2; Mark xiii. 13; Luke xxi. 16, 17). In all these passages the word “tribulation” signifies persecution. In Matthew xxiv. 21 Christ uses the same term with reference to the affliction of those pressed hard by siege, and to the calamities of the war through which Jerusalem was to pass before and during the destruction of the holy city by
the Romans (comp. Mark xiii. 19, 24). Here
the signification rises to that of judgment.

In Romans ii. 8, 9 the word appears in con-
nection with “the wrath, indignation and an-
guish” which will be meted out in the day of
wrath “to those that are factious and unright-
eous” (comp. as to the matter itself II. Thess.
i. 8-10; Rev. ii. 22, 23; Matt. xi. 22, 23; Luke
xii. 46, 47).

Thus it is clearly seen that the word “tribu-
lation” when used of the children of God, has
always reference to their persecution and the
suffering connected therewith; while, when
used of the enemies of Christ, it denotes the
judgments coming upon them together with
their dire consequences.

The expression “great tribulation” occurs
only in Matthew xxiv. 21; Revelation vii. 14,
ii. 22, 23. In the last passage it evidently sig-
nifies judgment, because it has reference to a
dreadful punishment to come upon a part of
the Church of Thyatira, which had suffered a
Jezebel-like tyranny to reign within its own
midst. And as this Church-form in its Satanic
character evidently will last till Christ is to
come, the term “great tribulation” must have
reference to an eschatological judgment yet to
come upon the Church having assumed the
character of the apostolic Thyatira (See especially vs. 25 and 26 of Rev. 2).

In Matthew xxiv. 21 our Lord applies the expression to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, including the lamentable consequences of that catastrophe. Here the meaning is that of a great judgment coming upon rejected Israel which, however, was to form itself into a standing tribulation of persecution among the nations (Luke xxi. 20-24). The reason for this double character of the great tribulation, prophesied for Israel (Dan. ix. 26, 27; Matt. xxiv. 21, etc.), lies in the fact that according to God’s covenant with Israel this tribulation of judgment was ordained to lead God’s people, by means of a tribulation of constant persecution, to a final restoration. Israel’s judgment could not end in total destruction, which is always the case with the enemies of God, as we shall see later.

In Revelation vii. 14 the term “great tribulation” is applied to a great number of people, robed in white, who “keep coming” out of a great tribulation during the time of the sixth seal, or the time preceding the event of the Parousia of Christ. Of course, the only admissible meaning of the term is that of a great tribulation of persecution; because the saints of God, washed in the blood of the Lamb, do
not emerge out of a great tribulation of judgment.

Taking all these passages together we are forced to the conclusion that the language of the New Testament throughout maintains this difference of meaning, as stated above. In a subsequent chapter we shall find opportunity to enter more in detail into this very important distinction and hope to show then that the saints of the Lord at no time before His Parousia will be exempted from the great tribulation of persecution, but only from that of judgment. Persecution is the brightest jewel in the crown of glory of God's people—judgment is the inevitable doom of the enemies of Christ.

The Lord's Coming in the light of Matthew xxiv. and allied passages.

Among all the New Testament utterances concerning the "last things" none can claim such an authority and weight as the Olivet discourse of our Master, touching His Parousia. That will forever remain the basis on which all sound exhibition of the things of the future must rest. The Son of man was not only convinced that, in consequence of the accomplishment of His great work of redemption, the reign and rule of the universe would be entrusted to Him; but He
also knew that His personal return from heaven at the end of the present age would form the very center of the developments of the end-time (Matt. xxviii. 18; John xii. 31, 32; Matt. xxvi. 64). Consequently there was none better qualified to sketch the future absolutely correctly than the Chief Prophet of the New Testament.

It is, therefore, not at all surprising to find that all the apostles have built on the eschatological foundation laid by Christ; just as the prophets of old spake by virtue of the Spirit of Christ which was in them (I. Peter i. 10, 11). But, among all the utterances of the Master touching His second coming and the developments of the end-time, there is none that could compare as to fulness, detailed description and conciseness with Matthew xxiv. and its parallels, Mark xiii., Luke xxi. This Olivet discourse of the Son of man has formed the inexhaustible fountain from which the subsequent prophetic stream not only took its origin, but also its circumscribed course. Hence, it will be our purpose in these pages to be mostly guided by what we find in this remarkable discourse of our Lord. In order, however, to obtain the right viewpoint, it will be necessary to inquire into the cause prompting the Master to explain Himself at such length.
TWO QUESTIONS.

It will be remembered that Christ at various times had spoken to His disciples about the necessity of His atoning death and resurrection (Matt. xvi. 21, xx. 18, 19; Luke xiii. 33). He had, especially during the last Passover week of His earthly life, discoursed to different audiences in the temple, when His disciples were present (Matt. xxi.-xxiii.). Thus, shortly before entering upon the Olivet discourse, He had most solemnly asserted the complete destruction of the city of Jerusalem and of its temple (Matt. xxiii. 36-39). Now, all these declarations of Christ upset the minds of His apostles. There were certain points well known to them from the Old Testament. For example, they knew that the Messiah should come, and this they found fulfilled in Christ. They also believed with all Israel that the promised Messiah, at His appearing, would execute judgment, not only on the entire Gentile nations, but also on the unbelieving part of Israel (Isa. ii. 12, xiii. 6, 9; Ezek. xiii. 5, xxx. 3; Joel i. 15, ii. 1, 11; Amos v. 18, 20; Obad. xv.; Zeph. i. 14). Now it is true, Jesus had repeatedly spoken plainly enough of a judgment that He would, at some future time, execute, after He had obtained glory and honor. The Father "gave Him [the Son] au-
authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man” (John v. 22, 27; Matt. xix. 28; Luke x. 14, xi. 31). He had, however, not indicated at what time this judgment would take place, nor when the glory spoken of would begin. They also knew from the prophecy of Daniel (ix. 13, 26, xii. 1) that before the final glory of the Messiah and His people “a great tribulation” of the holy city would precede. But now Christ had so positively announced to them His inevitable death at the hands of the Gentiles, that all their previous prophetic conceptions and expectations became confused. It is true the Old Testament Messianic predictions had clearly foretold severe sufferings of the Messiah before His final triumph (Isa. liii). Even a double coming or appearing of the Messiah is prophesied. In Zechariah xi. for example, we read about the rejection of the faithful Shepherd of Israel by His own people. In consequence of that the Lord’s people are given over to cruel shepherds and Jerusalem becomes a cup of reeling for all nations; but then the Lord will return to His people in mercy and establish His kingdom (Zech. xii. 1ff; comp. also Mal. ii. 5-iii. 1ff). But in spite of such clear indications of prophecy we do not find in the days of Christ among
His apostles or the people the slightest idea as to such a double coming of the Messiah. And as for His death, it is a well known fact that Christ's disclosures as to His ignominious sufferings took the apostles by surprise and consternation (Matt. xvi. 22, xvii. 23, xx. 21). Thus far they had expected a Messianic time and in it a contest of the Messiah with His enemies, together with the final judgment of all His opponents. But Christ, by His recent declarations, had shattered their Messianic expectations and had evidently divided the Messianic time into two distinct parts, namely, into the time of His death and into the time of His reappearing in glory. Now they are at a loss to know when that destruction of Jerusalem, alluded to in Daniel ix., and so definitely asserted by the Master a moment ago, would take place. They are in doubt, whether it will be at the time of His death or that of His Parousia. So stepping out of the temple the disciples call the attention of their Master to the "manner of stones and the manner of building" (Mark xiii. 1), and also to the fact that it was "adorned with goodly stones and [memorial] offerings" (Luke xxii. 5; comp. Matt. xxiv. 1). From the reply which our Lord makes it would seem as if the disciples wanted to express the idea that it seemed to
them impossible that such a solid and gorgeous masonry could ever be permitted to become the object of destruction. For Christ replies, either in the form of a question: “See ye not all these things?” or, perhaps better, in the form of an assertion: “Ye see not all these things.” That is, you do not look at the reverse of this spectacle. “Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matt. xxiv. 2).

In the meantime the Master had come with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, and sits down to rest. The overthrow of the temple as well as of the city is still agitating their minds, and so Peter, John, James and Andrew (Mark xiii. 3) privately put to their Master two questions: “Tell us when shall these things [the destruction of Jerusalem] be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming [Parousia] and of the end of the world [or the consummation of the present age]?” Luke records only the first question, being the most important for the curiosity of the disciples. Mark similarly, but adding, “And what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished,” or consummated? His second question, no doubt, has a plain reference to the second part of Matthew’s second question, or to the consummation of this age. As
to the sense of these two distinct questions the disciples are evidently eagerly concerned to know the chronological relation of the prophesied destruction of Jerusalem to the otherwise predicted Parousia, and the end of the age. Then it will be noticed that in their second question they closely connect the consummation of the age with the Parousia of their Master. With reference to the destruction of Jerusalem they want to know the time; but as to the Parousia and the end of the age they desire the Master to give to them a "sign," or foretoken, a signal that would indicate to them its near approach.

CHRIST'S ANSWER.

In replying to these queries Jesus takes up the second question as to the required sign first, being to Him as well as to them of more practical importance; although in His mind the event of Jerusalem's downfall has some significant bearing upon the formation of the end-time, as we shall see later. The apostles were curiously concerned about the times, but Christ directed their eyes and hearts from the temporal events to their spiritual and heavenly significations. His answer to the second question consists (1) In a solemn warning to His
disciples, Matthew xxiv, 4-5, and parallel. (2) In a succinct description of the development of the world-powers, vs. 6-8. (3) In a brief statement as to the fate of His followers, vs. 9-13. (4) In giving a definite sign of the time-point of the consummation of the age, v. 14.
I. THE WARNING

Matthew xxiv. 4-5: “Take heed that no man lead you astray. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray” (comp. Mark xiii. 5, 6; Luke xxi. 8).

There is no difference among the three evangelists as to the wording of Christ's warning; except that Luke is adding to the words, “I am He” the following: “The time is at hand,” meaning no doubt, that the time of the Parousia was at hand.

As to the exact purport of this general exhortation of the Master, it does not seem to have a specific bearing on the when and how of His coming, and the end of this age. It rather has reference to a universal danger which in general surrounds the return of the Lord, namely, to the fact that the promised revelation of the Son of man would be represented as having found its fulfilment in this or that person or event.

Formerly it was thought that Christ's prediction as to the appearance of pseudo-Christ's was fulfilled in men like Simon Magus, Menander, Dositheus, etc. They, however, never
professed to have come in the name of Jesus, neither did they claim to be Christ.

Others again have referred to those agitators mentioned in Acts v. 36, xxi. 38; but their pretence was only of a prophetic nature. When Christ says of those pseudo- Christs, that they would come "in His name," He evidently expects them to rise up within the bosom of the Christian church. But the very fact that they stand up in the name of the historical Christ precludes the supposition that they would claim to be the Jewish Messiah. On the contrary, when they shall say "I am He" they mean to say that they were, each one personally, that Christ who had affirmed His coming again at a later time.

Now, as to the fulfilment of that solemn prophecy of the Master, it is only too true that His church has been in danger more than once to be led astray by such false Christs. When, for example, Constantine the Great made the Christian church the ruling power of the world, then the expectation of the coming back of the glorified Redeemer lost its hold on the masses. They were of the opinion that that prophecy of Christ had found its happy realization in the establishment of the Church as a state church through the Emperor Constantine. Having been delivered from all perse-
The Warning

cutions, why shold they wait for another Millennium of peace? There were, indeed, only a few within the pale of the Church who thought and taught differently. Then, in the middle ages the well known papal institution put itself upon the throne as the supremely ruling power, declaring itself not only the representative of the millennial kingdom of Christ but also of His royal reign over the Church. The entire papal system as to doctrine and polity is a usurpation of the prerogatives and authority of the Son of man and consequently falsely called Christian. Our Lord, no doubt, in His warning had reference also to such anticipations of His Parousia, by means of which human conditions and achievements are said to have taken its place and rendered His personal return superfluous. Hence the solemn warning of Christ, "Beware," is more than ever in its place. For the great mass of so-called Christians look upon the present political, social, commercial, educational progress of our time as upon the unmistakable signs of the fast approaching universal brotherhood of mankind and of heaven upon earth. And this gospel of deification of man and human progress is proclaimed in the name of Christ and true Christianity. But Christ admonishes us to beware of every one who says, "I am He."
II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD POWERS BEFORE THE PAROUSIA

Matthew xxiv. 6-8: “And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places” (comp. Dan. vii.; Rev. vi. 1-8).

There are three main factors that ever came into consideration in the realization of the plan of redemption, namely, the world at large, the chosen people of God and the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, not surprising that the great Master in His Olivet discourse considers merely these three factors in His make-up of the future events preceding His Parousia. The first place He assigns to the world-powers in their development. In a few simple strokes (vs. 6-8), He gives to His disciples an epitome of general history of the nations of the world. When He says literally: “You shall be about to hear of wars and rumors of war,” or of wars
impending, He evidently lays great stress upon this inevitable fact, and well might He; for the history of the nations since the days of the Apostles, has been merely a history of strife and bloodshed between the tribes of the earth, up to the present time. Not even half a century has ever passed, but that the war-fury has shaken one or the other Christianized nation.

This universality and inevitableness of continuous feuds causes the Master to exhort His followers not to be troubled, as if they would indicate the nearness of His coming (v. 6). These bloody events "must" (dei) needs come to pass. They form an essential part of the movements of the economy of divine grace, as every "must" in Scripture does (comp. Jer. li. 46; Gen. xxvii. 29; Matt. x. 22, xvi. 21, xviii. 7; Acts iii. 21; II. Cor. v. 10).

At the same time the Master calls the attention of His disciples to the fact that these warlike events, in the progress of time, would not only become more international—a war of all against all—but they would also leave in their trend in a more marked manner the inevitable consequences of such disturbances, "famine, pestilence," etc. Even the ever-recurring terrestrial quiverings shall become "great, stretching from place to place"; and the celest-
tial world, the heavens, shall reveal unusually terrific signs (Luke xxii. 11). Christ, therefore, attests (1) An increase of warlike upheavals of the nations and kingdoms of the earth, together with intensified sufferings of mankind in consequence of those world-disturbances and alliances. (2) He plainly indicates that this accelerating unsettling of the very basis of universal peace and well-being of mankind, though not as yet the end itself, is nevertheless the "beginning of travail" (Matt. xxiv. 8). (3) He also most assuredly holds out to His disciples the fact that finally, before the end, still severer "pangs" or "throes" shall follow, out of which a new state of affairs shall emerge. (4) When Luke unexpectedly intersperses this sentence: "Then said He unto them" (xxi. 10), he, no doubt, wants to convey the idea that Christ in the subsequent words, referring to those tumults, intended to call the attention of all His followers to the deep signification which these convulsions of the nations would have for them. (5) It is also evident that the Master brings these destructive events into the closest connection with His Parousia and the completion of all things. He assigns to them the importance of precursors of "His day." Although not the end itself, they bear an unmis-
takeable part in its ushering in—they form a “sign.”

Now, it will be noticed, that this first part of Christ’s discourse concerning the development of the world-powers, up to the appearing of the Son of man, rests mainly on the prophecy of Daniel, and is further enlarged in the apocalyptical vision of John, especially that of chapter six of Revelation. A careful study of those prophecies will confirm this.

(a) Nebuchadnezzar’s Colossus (Dan. ii.).

It cannot be our purpose to give a detailed explanation of the monarchical image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, but merely to show its bearing upon Christ’s outline of the development of the world-powers.

(1) According to Daniel’s interpretation of the colossal statue, the four component parts of the body represent, in the order mentioned, four different phases of the Gentile power. Or, four different forms of one and the same world-power in its opposition to the God of Israel and His kingdom. It is now generally admitted that before the eye of the prophet Daniel passed at that time the political changes that after the then-existing Babylonian monarchy, would bring in turn Medo-Persia, Greece-Macedonia, and finally Rome, to the
ascendancy. But, as history has shown, it was only through bloody wars and destructive conquests that these political changes were and are still brought about.

(2) It must further be observed that the four metals representing these four world-powers are mentioned in the descending order of their respective intrinsic value. They are, besides, brought in connection with the four parts of the human body, which, as to position and importance, present the same downward gradation. This is evidence that these four world-monarchies shall be different as to quality, though in the order of their succession they may be larger in extent and power. Their dignity is measured, not by political grandeur, but by the theocratic measurement, i.e., by their relation to the people of God. Thus, for example, the Medo-Persian kingdom, overthrowing Nebuchadnezzar, was, as to extent and power, superior to the Babylonian realm; but prophetically it is said to be "inferior" (Dan. ii. 39): because it presented under its later kings a greater moral and social depravation than under its former ruler. Besides, Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis, which followed the friendly Cyrus, oppressed the people of God more than any of the Chaldean rulers had ever done; compare the Books of Es-
ther, Ezra and Nehemiah. The Greco-Macedonian kingdom was the largest of the three, exercising royal rule over the whole earth (Dan. ii. 39). But from the prophetic or theoretic standpoint it appears inferior to the preceding two. The reason for this is found in its ethical and religious degeneracy, and in its fiercer opposition to the kingdom of Jehovah. As for the fourth or Roman world-power, which is not only still existing, but also forming and shaping as to its final division in ten distinct kingdoms (represented by the ten toes of the image, Dan. ii. 41-43), it has had already a full share in the oppression of the Church of God, and the final outlook in that respect is anything but a relief for the saints of the Lord. This fact, however, will receive more attention in a subsequent chapter.

(3) And as for the close relation of these political upheavals and formations to the Parousia of Christ and the consummation of this age, we only need to quote Daniel's explanation, chapter ii. 44-45: "And in the days of those (ten final) kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." "The stone, cut out
of the mountains” without human agency, the Son of man, at His second coming shall destroy all world-rule and power, past and present, v. 45. Then political revolutions and convulsions have served their destined purposes.

(b) *The Four Riders.* (Rev. vi. 1-11).

The second vision of John, that of the four riders, not only fully corroborates Christ’s statement as to the warlike political events; but furnishes us also with some very significant additional items.

In the introduction to this second vision, in Revelations chapters four and five, God first of all appears as Lord of the Universe. Then Christ, in so far as He by His victory over sin and Satan has assumed the regency of the world and become Head and Lord of His Church (Matt. xxviii. 18; Phil. ii. 7, etc.) This enthronement of the Son of man to the dignity and authority of Co-regent with His Father, at once assured to John the fact that He would overrule and subject all earthly events to the realization of His saving purposes. This thought is symbolized to him in the vision of the four riders.

The first one evidently occupies the position of a Leader or Captain. He rides a white
horse, symbolizing purity, peace and victory (Rev. i. 14, iv. 4). He has already a bow, a far reaching weapon of warfare; but a crown is given to him. In the book of Revelation as well as in the Old Testament, crowns symbolize royal power and victory. Now, such a crown of victory is given to this first rider even before he turns out to make war. Victory is assured to him before he begins battle (Rev. vi. 1). He is further described as “going forth conquering and in order to conquer.” That is, he is already a conqueror, and this fact assures to him the victory in every future contest. In other words, He is the absolute Victor.

Now, raising the question, who is symbolized by this rider, the answer cannot be doubtful. He certainly cannot represent any human hero; for the description goes far beyond any and every human ability and achievement. Hence this rider cannot, as some have asserted, symbolize the world-power in general, or Antichrist in particular. For neither the former nor the latter ever rides a white horse, the color of victory and peace. Besides Antichrist never appears as an absolute conqueror. It is true there are two instances recorded, where he is said to have “overcome.” That is in the case of the saints and the two witnesses persecuted by him (Rev. xiii. 7, xi. 7).
But in each case, as the sequence shows, the seeming victory proves a complete defeat.

The most natural and logical explanation of the first rider is the one which holds him to be a symbol of Christ exalted, and that for the following reasons:

1. Not only the immediate context, but also all the introductory chapters of Revelation, in fact the entire scope of that book points to Christ as the one who is to lead His people triumphantly through all persecutions and hardships to a glorious victory. It would have been, indeed, very distressing for John, after he had received the consoling assurance that the developments of the mysteries of the future were safely lodged in the hands of the Lamb slain (Rev. v. 1-10), to behold in a vision marching at the head of these apocalyptic events an absolute destroyer.

(2) The description of this first rider corresponds only to Christ, He being the only absolute conqueror. The one victory mentioned in Revelations v. 5 by which on the cross He “overcame” once for all (Rev. v. 5, 9), included and assured to Him all future achievements, yea, rendered them as facts already accomplished in that one engagement. Christ is the “stronger,” “greater than he that is in the world.” He “overcame and sat down with
His Father in His throne” (Luke xi. 22, I. John iv. 4, v. 4-5; Rev. iii. 21, xv. 2, xvii. 14).

(3) The prophetic description given of the Messiah in the forty-fifth Psalm, which in Hebrews i. 8-9 is expressly referred to Christ, corresponds exactly to the description of the first rider. There we find the royal honor, the riding on a horse, the bearing and using of the bow with telling effect upon the enemies; the turning out into battle and the complete victory (comp. Zech. i. 8, 10).

(4) Exactly in the same manner does this first rider correspond to the rider in Revelations xix. 11, etc. It is true the first one wears a single crown in the sense of a wreath or garland, the badge of victory in the games of military valor; while the second marches forth wearing many diadems or crowns as badges of royalty. But it must be remembered that in chapter vi. 6, Christ goes forth to begin His victorious campaign; hence He wears but one crown, the one which He won on the cross. In chap. xix. vs. 11, etc., however, He marches forth to execute judgment after He has put all His enemies under His footstool and conquered all the kings and kingdoms of this world (chap. xix. 6, 13, 16, xi. 15), hence the many diadems.

(5) The objection that Christ could not be
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the Lamb opening the book, and at the same time a warrior on horseback, overlooks the fact that Christ is represented as a Lamb slaughtered in His relation to His Father, for whom He has purchased His Church, consequently also in His relation to the book of the future mysteries which He, on account of His vicarious death, is counted worthy to unsolve (Matt. xxviii. 18; Phil. ii. 7f). But in His relation to a wicked and rebellious world He is but a warrior, because engaged in a contest which of necessity must terminate victoriously for Him (Ps. xlv. 4-6, ii. 8-9; Isa. xi. 4, xlix. 2, Dan. ii. 34, 35, 44; Rev. ii. 27; Gen. xlix. 9-10).

Now, if Christ is represented by the first rider then He is the Leader of the rest and He uses them as His weapons of warfare with which to carry out His purposes. And as the second rider symbolizes war, the third famine, the fourth death in general from various sources, as pestilence, wild beasts, etc., we find here mentioned those specific, ever recurring plagues which Jehovah expressly calls "my four sore judgments," which He "sends" (Ezek. xiv. 21), by which He "consumes" (Jer. xiv. 12), which He "appoints" over His people (Jer. xv. 3); by which He "punishes" the nations (Jer. xxvii. 8; comp. Jer. xxii. 7, xxiv. 10; Ezek. vi. 11, etc., vii. 15). It is therefore, a
mistaken idea that wars in their various forms and destructive consequences are events occurring outside or even against the overruling manifestations of divine sovereignty.

Taking the four riders together we are taught by way of a vision, the lesson of Christ that wars will ever occur, they form an inherent part of the economy of the divine government of the world. It is by means of these "sore judgments" that Christ is waging His contest with the world for the purpose of converting some and punishing others, and as Christ has said, "Ye shall hear of wars," it is evident that He means to say that His followers of all ages of necessity must pass through these universal chastisements.

Following, however, the further development of John's vision we also discover the second point of Christ's assertion, namely, that a time of "travail" must come yet (Matt. xxiv. 8), which will beget a new order of things. After the second, third and fourth seals in the visions of continuous wars, famines, pestilence and death have passed before his eyes, the breaking of the fifth seal directs his attention to a company of disembodied souls who have been martyred for the sake of the word and testimony of Christ, which they held fast to the end (Rev. vi. 9-11; compare i.9,xii.17,xix.10).
They appear to him as having been “slain” or slaughtered; and their souls as having been poured out at the base of the heavenly altar, just as the sacrificial blood was poured out at the altar of burnt offering (Lev. iv. 7, v. 9). These martyrs raise the loud cry, “How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (chapter vi. 10). The contents of the first four seals—wars, famine, pestilence and death—evidently do not appear to them as a sufficient expiation for the great guilt which the world has been, and is still, contracting by persecuting God’s children. In these universal, ordinary judgments they cannot see the fulfilment of that sure vindication and avenging which Christ has promised to His believers, Luke xviii. 7, etc. Hence these martyr-souls expect extraordinary punitive judgments to come; and as the Master is the Leader in the great contest, they appeal to Him for redress. With the opening of the sixth seal the answer is given, the time for avenging having come at last.

We see, therefore, that a complete harmony exists between the statement of Christ, the prophecy of Daniel and the vision of John. General judgments of war, etc., will always occur; they will in the process of time assume
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an international character and increase as to fierceness and severity of results. They will, however, not bring the desired end—extraordinary pangs and woes have to set in in order to bring about a radical change; of what nature the latter will be Christ does not inform us; we have to learn that from another source.
III. THE CHURCH OF GOD BEFORE THE PAROUSIA

Matt. xxiv. 9-14: "Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you and ye shall be hated of all the nations for My name’s sake. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endur-eth to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come."

(a) The Tribulation of Persecution (v. 9-12).

From the world-powers our Lord turns the attention of His disciples to the fate of His Church, the company of His followers. In doing so He solemnly exhorts them: "But take ye heed to yourself" (Mark xiii. 9). It is well enough to study the time on the great dial-plate of the political developments; but it is equally, if not more so, important for the Lord’s children to watch the position which
the world-powers will ever and anon occupy towards the members of the body of Christ. When doing that, they will find it necessary to scrutinize very carefully their own spiritual condition, and their ability to stand firm, unmovable in the days of persecution and temptation. For the Master depicts to them rather a trying and testing future.

Hitherto He led us through the ages of war-troubles, up to the "beginning of travail" of a new æon. Now we notice that His statement as to the events of His Church covers exactly the same time, and up to the same time point. During the period of political developments, His own Church will pass through a severe tribulation of persecutions. Christ indicates this by the adverb "then" (v. 9) which in this case does not refer to a mathematical time-point; but covers the entire course of time mentioned from verses 6-8. Parallel with those outward world-calamities, arising from war, etc., progresses the inward distress of the faithful saints of God. Whenever and wherever the political upheavals shake the nations, the persecutions of the Christians will keep step with those evolutions. No age of the Church of Christ, nor any nation where believers are found, will be exempt from this tribulation (Matt. xxiv. 9). Our Lord men-
tions especially five fruitful sources of sore distress for His followers. (1) The political powers at the time being, kings, governors, etc. (Mark xiii. 9; Luke xxi. 12). (2) Ecclesiastical tribunals, synagogues, etc. (3) A false Christianity, vying with the state in the oppression of those standing firm in their faith in Christ Jesus. This unnatural hatred will demoniacally seize even the nearest kinsmen of professors of the Lord (Mark xiii. 12, etc.; Luke xxi, 16). (4) The outward and inward apostasy of the Church, rending apart the body of Christ and becoming a powerful temptation for the faithful portion of the flock of the Lord (Matt. xxiv. 11; Rev. iii. 10). (5) The rise of a universal “anomia” or lawlessness, and, as a necessary consequence, a general vanishing of brotherly love and affection (Matt. xxiv. 12).

When Christ then further says to His disciples, “But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved,” He, no doubt, refers in general to each and every faithful witness of every age and time, but also more particularly to the time of the end, when the tribulation of persecution of God’s saints will reach its culminating point.

Now, (1) as to the universality and continuation of persecution, the Olivet discourse fully
harmonizes with other statements of Christ as well as those of His apostles. The Master has laid down this general and absolute rule: “Remember the word I said unto you, a servant is not greater than his Lord. If they persecuted Me they will also persecute you . . . But all these things will they do unto you for My name’s sake, because they know not Him that sent me” (John xv. 20-21; comp. Matt. v. 11-12, x. 23, xxiii. 34). Hence it is the common expectation of the apostles and early Christians that they had to pass through a tribulation of severe persecution and affliction. Peter, for example, exhorts his readers, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter iv. 12). In like manner Paul exhorts all the disciples of Christ gained on his first missionary tour, “To continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts xiv. 22). Consequently we find on almost every page of the Acts of the Apostles and throughout the epistles the clear evidences of the fulfilment of Christ’s prediction concerning the tribulation of persecution of His believers. And as for the history of the Church of God up to this moment, we can safe-
ly say that the most of its pages are written in blood. Especially has this been the case in those times when the name of Jesus manifested His power visibly and energetically in the hearts and lives of His followers. Hence the first centuries of the church of Christ, the times of the Culdeans, of the Reformation, and the times of Gentile-Christian, faithful and holy life were fraught with baptisms of blood.

(2) As for the sources of the different persecutions of Christians a careful perusal of the Acts of the Apostles and the annals of Church history in general must convince us that throughout the ages past the world-power as such has occupied the lamentable position of being the most prominent instigator of tribulation to the followers of the Lamb. How often during the past centuries, the word of the Master has come true in all lands and nations, “They shall deliver you up to councils ... and before governors and kings shall ye stand for My sake for a testimony unto them” (Mark xiii. 9). The attitude of the world-power as such, always has been, is now and ever will be, inimical to Christ and His kingdom; because it is finally doomed to destruction—hence its revolting against that higher power which manifests itself especially in the life of the saints of God. In addition to that, the proph-
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ecy of Daniel (chapters seven and twelve), as well as that of Revelation throughout, reveals the sad and gloomy fact that the finally developing world-power of the end-time will even be more cruel and ferocious in its hostility to the Son of man and His servants. This, however, will claim our attention later.

(3) An equally prolific source of enormous tribulation to God’s children has been ecclesiastical tribunals, synagogues and church councils. In this respect Christ raises a most severe charge against the Scribes and Pharisees, the most prominent members of the Jewish Sanhedrin, and against Jerusalem, the seat of that highest judicatory in Israel, saying, “Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her” (Matt. xxiii. 34, 35, 37). The Apostles Peter and John, especially the first martyrs of Christ Stephen and James, had to experience only
too severely the truth of Christ's prediction concerning the tribulation of His true followers (Acts chap. iv.-xii.). It was in almost every case the synagogue that set itself against the cross of Christ and threw into the dungeon the adherents thereof. It stretched its fangs even to the heralds of Christ while they were proclaiming the gospel of salvation in heathen lands (Acts xiii. 45-50, xiv. 2-6, 19, xvii. 4-9, 13, xviii. 12-16, xxi. 27-xxvi. 32).

But not any less, if not even more, the tribunals of the Christian church of almost all ages have been hot-beds of bloody persecutions. This has been especially the case since the papal hierarchy has established its authority and sway over the Christian world. It would require volumes to describe the innumerable atrocities which the holy seat of Rome in the name of religion has been inflicting upon the very salt of the earth, the Lord's best children. Church tribunals in this respect, have outdone, at least fully equalled, the cruelties measured out by heathen governments to professing Christians.

(4) An equally dangerous source of persecution for the Lord's own is that false Christianity whose hostile position our Lord describes in Matt. xxiv. 10-11; Mark xiii. 12, etc.; Luke xxi. 16. The apostles in their days are warn-
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ing already against false teachers, who not only would cause many "to stumble," bringing in "privily destructive heresies," denying even the Master that bought them; but who, like grievous wolves, would rend apart and scatter the Lord's flock (II. Peter ii. 1; Acts xx. 28, etc.; Gal. ii. 4; Rev. ii. 2; Phil. i. 15). Unfortunately every age and clime of the Christian church has experienced the destructive effects of the various heresies and schisms that have disquieted the peace of Christ's body. While the Master on the one hand most tenderly exhorts His followers, "Love one another" (John xv. 17) the world looking on has again and again witnessed the heart-rending spectacle of Christians hating Christians and professors of Christ maligning andslandering professors of the same Lord. In only too many instances this unchristian hatred has produced open persecutions, in which literally the nearest blood-relations were playing the sad part of betrayers, accusers and even executioners of their own flesh. It was so in the days of those ten extraordinary persecutions of the first centuries, and it was so in the late Boxer atrocities in China. It is therefore, not at all surprising that in the latter days the attitude of apostate Christianity will be most pernicious and arrogant, as we shall see later.
(5) When our Master finally prophesies an increase of iniquity and a corresponding decrease of love in the many, then He puts the two in the relation of cause and effect; the one of necessity produces the other. At the same time He evidently indicates that this spiritual degeneration shall be universal, comparatively speaking, “the many” shall apostatize. But it cannot be the meaning of the Lord that iniquity should be constantly on the increase and thus keep step with the progress of time. He refers rather to a specific time when the ordinary wickedness of men shall assume a more general, decided and aggravated form, and that time cannot be any other that the end-time. Just as the ordinary warlike conditions of the nations, according to the first part of Christ’s discourse, shall finally culminate in a bellum omnium contra omnes, and usher in a time of extraordinary woes, so the general iniquity shall press forward to an exceptional height. This becomes still more evident when we consider the fact that Christ uses the original for “iniquity,” or rather “lawlessness” (anomia), in an eschatological discourse, in which He is constantly moving His thoughts and statements toward that great and decisive event of His Parousia. We are especially compelled to understand the increase of wick-
edness of the end-time, when we consider the fact that Paul in his description of the time immediately preceding the Parousia, is speaking of the appearing of "the lawless one" (ho anomos), in whom the "anomia" shall reach its culminating expression (II. Thess. ii. 4, 7, 8). In the days of Paul the mystery of lawlessness was already "working" (v. 7) but "the lawless one" had to appear yet. So the marked abounding of iniquity stands in close relation to the appearance of the one who will be personified lawlessness.

It is, therefore, evident that Christ in speaking of a time of extraordinary emancipation from all human and divine laws and orders, plainly points to that time which is to precede His appearing in glory. For, the Parousia of the lawless one is put down for that period (II. Thess. ii.). In other words, the Master in describing the attitude which the hostile world-power will occupy toward His Church for a second time leads His apostles through the present age up to His coming.

As a refreshing oasis in the desert, so appears the assertion of Christ, "But he that endureth to the end, the same [that one] shall be saved." It is a great comfort to know that during all the times of persecutions and unbelief there will be some elect children of
the Lord, who will stand fast in their adherence to Christ and His testimony, and that in spite of all tribulation and distress. The history of the church of Christ, especially in its martyr periods, bears ample witness to this fact. But it is also a source of praise and glory to know that Christ has not merely reference to the endurance of all His faithful and steadfast children; but that more particularly He points to "that one," who during the perils and temptations of that fearful end-time shall be true to his coming Lord and Master. While the apostasy and wickedness will assume alarming proportions, there will be a few, comparatively, that will not be swept away by the universal deluge of unbelief, wickedness and demoniacal hatred. All such will be saved when He comes. At the same time it is worthy of notice that the Master restricts the saving only to "that one," who shall not quiver.

Comparing this second part of Christ's discourse with the first we cannot help observing a striking parallelism between the two. As for the world at large its general calamities in consequence of continued war, etc., will in course of time increase, because all the nations will be found in warlike attitudes and pursuits. But that will be the beginning of those extraordinary throes and woes that bear in their bosom a
new era or æon of time. As for the Church of God, there is allotted to her a corresponding persecution in general on the part of the world-power, until that fiery trial shall at last increase in the time of the absolute anemia and demonical hatred. But this period of lawlessness will usher in that same new era of decided change.


There is, however, another side of the Church’s life which the Master touches upon in these few words: “And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world [inhabited earth] for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come” (v. 14).

The idea of “Gospel” or glad tidings at once recalls the joyous expression of Isaiah liii. 7, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings... that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation.” In like manner does the idea of “kingdom” rest on an Old Testament foundation (comp. Ps. xcvii. 1; Zech. xiv. 9; Dan. ii. 44, vii. 27). The shorter form, “Gospel of the kingdom” is generally found in the Gospel of Matthew, while Mark and Luke use the fuller form, “the Gospel of the king-
dom of God” (Mark i. 14, etc.; Luke iv. 43, viii. 1, xvi. 16).

Now, as to the import of Christ’s prophecy it wants to be observed: (1) When our Lord, according to Matthew, says: “This Gospel of the kingdom,” He evidently refers not merely to the glad tidings of salvation in general, but more particularly to that special part of the Gospel about which He was just discoursing to His disciples. It includes therefore, His Parousia, the establishment of His kingdom on earth, and the consummation of all things. In fact, the mere term “the Gospel” has the same sense; for Mark uses it in this very connection, instead of the fuller form of Matthew, Mark xiii. 10.

(2) The prophecy of Christ embraces “the whole world,” or the inhabited earth. This corresponds exactly with the extent of the command or commission which the risen Lord before His ascension gave to His apostles. According to Matthew, they were to go and “disciple all nations” (Matt. xxviii. 18); according to Mark they were “to go into all the world and preach the glad tidings to every creature” (Mark xvi. 15). Our Lord, therefore, in His present discourse anticipates the full carrying out of His later commission, “Go ye into all the world.”
(3) Taking this prediction of Christ and His last command to His apostles together, nothing is more apparent, than that the full realization of the last will and testament of the Lord concerning the evangelization of all the nations is that sure sign preceding His Parousia, that will bring about the consummation of the present age. Hence Mark (xiii. 10) says: "The Gospel must first be preached unto all the nations." We possess, therefore, in these words of Christ a definite time-point before which the Lord Jesus will not and cannot return. When the Master's command is fully carried out, then His prediction is fulfilled, and when that is verified, then and only then, the end will come. But inasmuch as the time-point of the fulfilment of the Lord's commission is not given, and cannot be determined by any human calculation, we are still left in uncertainty as to the exact moment of Christ's Parousia. The one thing however is sure, that it is left to the faithfulness of the Church of Christ, in presenting the Gospel to every creature either "to hasten" or to delay, the day of the Lord, 2 Peter iii. 11-12.

(4) In this connection we ought not to overlook the fact that Mark (xiii. 10) puts this missionary outlook of Christ right between His sayings concerning the persecutions of His fol-
lowers. In doing so, he clearly indicates the close connection in which the lively missionary activity of God's children stands to their tribulation of persecution. The fiercer the opposition of the world to the advance of the Gospel ever has been, the more willing has the Lord made His servants to come up to the command, "Go ye!" In the apostolic days, for example, the great persecution, arising against the Church in Jerusalem, not only scattered its members throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, but induced them also "to go about preaching the Word" (Acts viii. 1-5). The severe sufferings of a Paul during his missionary tours did not in the least quench his ardent longing to preach Christ crucified to those that knew Him not. Rising from his apparent state of lifelessness in consequence of being stoned, he goes to the next city and continues his preaching to Jews and Gentiles (Acts xiv. 19-22). It is on this account not at all surprising that John is seeing in the end-time "another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal Gospel to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev. xiv. 6-7). The missionary activity and martyr spirit of the persecuted Church of Christ is never outdone by the growing and intensifying spirit of malig-
nity and persecution of the world power. When the dark forces of the abyss spread terror and destruction around them, the Spirit of God raises up and endows men and women with more than human power to confront the onslaught of darkness with a firm, unfluctuating spirit of energy, patience and endurance in the work of presenting the Gospel of Christ to a benighted world. Thus, for example, the recent atrocities perpetrated upon the thousands of Chinese Christians have not in the least diminished the missionary zeal and fire of God's children who had the salvation of China at heart. No sooner had the allied powers restored peace than the Lord's messengers re-entered the Middle kingdom from all sides, together with reinforcements, in order to do the same work of their Lord and Master again.

Reviewing our Master's discourse as far as considered, we have found that He is endeavoring to lead the thoughts of His apostles through the different phases of political and Church life from His own time onward. But in each case, He halts at a certain time-point, indicating that then the ordinary course of events and conditions would be interrupted by extraordinary occurrences in State and Church. Within the sphere of political developments this turning point will be the time of "the be-
ginning of travail" or of unusual woes (Matt. xxiv. 8); while in the onward movements of ecclesiastical life the time of "anomia" or lawlessness will mark such an eventful period (Matt. xxiv. 12). To all appearances these two time-points are coincident; the time of travail will be the distinctive time of wickedness or lawlessness. Keeping therefore, vividly before our mind what Christ has said regarding the political and ecclesiastical conditions, preceding that unusual time, we will see at once that He in part answered the question of His disciples touching a sign of His Parousia. The fact that international upheavals, aggravated tribulations of persecutions of God's children and lively missionary exertions of the Lord's servants and handmaids would take place, might be to them indications that the dial of the world's time-piece would now move on a little faster towards "the last hour." Of that last hour, however, He does not say anything further for the present, but comes back to the first question of His disciples, the question as to when that judgment would come upon Israel and Jerusalem, of which He had so definitely spoken (Matt. xxiii. 36-xxiv. 2). In doing so the Master not only answers the query of the apostles, but He also adds another foreboding of His approaching Parousia.
IV. ISRAEL AND JERUSALEM

Matt. xxiv. 15-20: "When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand, then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains. Let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house, and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days.” Compare Mark xiii. 14, etc., Luke xxi. 20, etc.

The grammatical construction, by means of which our Lord connects these verses with those preceding, at once convinces us that He is not continuing the previous subject of His Parousia, but that He intends to come back, after a digression, to a subject mentioned before, but not touched upon any further. The adversative particle "but" (de) (Luke xxi. 20; Mark xiii. 14) very readily indicates that Christ intends to leave the present subject in order to turn to something else. This is still more evident from the conjunction "now" (oun) of Matthew xxiv. 15; the signification
of which is generally overlooked. Here it cannot have the meaning of “therefore” or “consequently”; because what is said in v. 15 cannot be deduced logically from what is expressed in v. 14. The destruction of Jerusalem is no necessary consequence of the universal spread of the Gospel. That conjunction, therefore, has here its second meaning and force, according to which after a parenthesis, episode or digression of speech the author comes back to a point passed by before, but now to be taken up. This point cannot be anything else than the question of the disciples, when the temple would be destroyed. Christ turns now from the ecumenical part of His discourse to the more particular subject of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It is as much as if He had said, “Now, to come back to your first question.” The fact that the apostles had raised the inquiry about that event compelled the Master to touch upon it in some way; especially as it does bear such a momentous relation to Christ’s Parousia, as shall become evident directly.

In order, however, to understand the Master’s exposition rightly, it becomes very necessary to weigh the words of our Lord carefully, not allowing any preconceived idea to set aside the exact language of the text.

The disciples had asked their Master,
"When shall these things be?" Namely, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Our Lord, in replying to that query

(1) Calls their attention to a well known sign of the approach of that dreadful event, v. 15.

(2) He exhorts His disciples at the first indication of that sign to flee from the doomed city and surrounding country, "quickly."

(3) He predicts in connection with that calamity an unprecedented "tribulation" for Israel, v. 17-21.

(4) With reference to "the days" or duration of that judgment He declares that one part of the same would be "amputated" or cut off, so as to be executed at a later period, v. 22.

(5) Concerning the interval between these two cut-apart periods of one and the same judgment, He predicts for Israel a continuous state of tribulation, Luke xxii. 34.

(1) As to the sign of Jerusalem's destruction. When our Lord says, "When now ye shall see [have seen] the abomination of desolation," He undoubtedly refers to a sign that could be perceived with the eye—to something visible. He calls special attention to the reading of that passage in Daniel which speaks about such a noticeable abomination, and then avers, that when this prophecy of Daniel would
be verified, then the desired "sign or "foreboding" had appeared. With this Christ had, indirectly at least, indicated to His apostles at what time-point this disastrous catastrophe would set in. As for the abomination of desolation, it may be noticed that the Septuagint thereby translates the Hebrew "abomination of the destroyer" (Dan. ix. 27). Some have thought that the expression referred to an idol put up in the temple; but such a fact is not proven. The putting up of the imperial column in Jerusalem by Pilate (Jos. b. j., 2, 9, 2) was done thirty years before the Jewish war, so Christ could not refer to that. Even the atrocities which the party of Zelotes perpetrated in the temple cannot be meant; because they happened after the Christians had left Jerusalem and Judea. The abomination of desolation can only refer to the hostile army of the destroyers of the city and the temple. When they in Daniel's prophecy are called an "abomination," then that is done for two reasons: (a) Being Roman or heathen soldiers, their very presence defiled the holy city as well as Jehovah's sanctuary. (b) They, by destroying temple and city, made an end to the sacrificial cultus (Dan. ix. 27, xi. 31, xii. 11). They committed therefore a crime, a sacrilege. Comparing the parallel passage in Luke xxii. 20, we
see at once that Christ refers to the marching of the Roman army against Jerusalem. For there we read, “But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand.” Such an event Christ had predicted already on another occasion and He refers, no doubt, here to that utterance: “For the days shall come when thine enemies shall cast up a bank [or palisade] of besieging armies about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground” (Luke xix. 43-44).

(2.) The Flight of the Disciples (v. 16-18.) The Lord tells His disciples “flee” and that in haste, as soon as they would see the holy city “being closed in” (present part.) by the armies of the enemy. They should not wait until it was entirely surrounded by an unbreakable iron chain and thus an escape made impossible, Luke xxi. 20. While the besieging was in progress the apostles should manage their escape. Besides, the Lord admonishes them to exercise the greatest haste with reference to this flight. As soon as they should notice the beginning of the fulfilment of that clear sign of Daniel, they should hasten to secure their own safety. So much should they speed their escape that they should not for a moment think of anything else than to save their naked life (Matt.xxiv.16-18;
Luke xxii. 20-21; Mark xiii. 14-16). In order to impress the minds of the disciples as to the great importance of watching for the significant sign of Daniel and acting in strict accordance with the warning it contains, the Master intersperses the solemn admonition, "Let him that readeth [that prophecy of Daniel] understand," i.e. pay attention to it. Now, it is a remarkable fact that the Church of Jerusalem has heeded the solemn warning of Christ to the very letter and at the right moment. Already in the year 69 A.D., when the Romans began to invade the land, all the Christians left Jerusalem and Judea and betook themselves to the little city of Pella, so that the year after none of them could perish in the great disaster of the city (Eus. h. e. 3-5). On account of the great haste with which that flight was to be accomplished, the Lord admonishes His disciples to intercede their Father in heaven to arrange circumstances so at the time, that His fleeing children should not be compelled to travel during the winter storms (when the brooklets of the land rise to streams); or on a Sabbath day, when their fleeing would be connected with Sabbath desecration (Matt. xxiv. 19-20). Also in this respect the Lord mercifully remembered His children; for the actual siege began in the month of May.
Israel and Jerusalem

As these followers of the Lord Jesus, by faith in Him as their Saviour, had escaped the judgment to follow Israel’s rejection of its Messiah, they could not be entangled in that visible retribution of God’s wrath against the chosen people. Consequently the Lord graciously provided for them a safe place of refuge, and at the right moment, by the promptings of His Spirit, He apprised them of the imminent danger.

(c) Jerusalem’s Great Tribulation. Matthew xxiv. 21-22: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” Compare Mark xiii. 19-20.

In considering this portion of Christ’s discourse it is especially necessary to ask the question, what is written? We have found already that Christ in this very discourse is building upon the foundation laid by Daniel’s prophecy. Now, this prophet had predicted a great tribulation which would come upon Israel for rejecting its Messiah, and would continue to a decreed end (Dan. ix. 26). But Daniel, in full accordance with the other prophets, predicted also that the same judgment would pass over
to the hostile Gentile nations in the Messianic time (Dan. ix. 27; comp. Isa. ii. 12, xiii.6,9; Ezek. xiii. 5, xxx. 3; Joel i. 15, ii. 1, 11, iii. 4; Amos v. 18, 20; Obad. xv; Zeph. i. 14). But it wants to be kept in mind that all the prophets of the Old Testament see these two distinct judgments, that over Israel and that over the nations (Gojim) as running on one continuous line without any interval of time between. It was the expectation of the believing portion of Israel that, when the Messiah would come, He would at once execute the final judgment upon hardened Israel as well as upon the nations.

Our Lord plainly takes up this prophecy of Daniel again and holds out to hardened Israel the destruction of Jerusalem as well as of the temple. In connection with that punitive judgment He predicts to God's chosen people an extraordinary, most severe tribulation to come. But of the "days" or duration of that unusual tribulation He says literally, "If those days had not been cut off (or amputated) all flesh would not have been saved [Mark xiii. 20, positively; "No flesh would have been saved]. But on account of the elect [Mark in addition "whom He chose"] those days will be cut off."

Now, there are several points here that claim our attention. The original, usually translated "shortened," means literally, to shorten by
cutting off one part, or, to amputate. And as in the text that verb is found in the aorist, the absolute past tense, it has to be translated, "If those days had not been cut apart once for all," etc. Christ means to say therefore, that with reference to those, at His time yet future, days of Jerusalem's great tribulation, one part had already been cut off. Of course, not in reality yet, as they were still future; but in the everlasting counsel and decree of God. Hence Christ continues, that for the elect's sake those days would (in reality) be cut apart. We learn therefore from these words of the Master this most important fact, that God in His counsel had cut off or amputated one part or member of those days of tribulation in which His punitive judgment upon Israel would be executed. But He also tells us why God has thus cut off one part of those days of vengeance. Had he not done so, then, He says, all flesh, the entire human race, would have been lost. If Jehovah, at the time of Jerusalem's destruction, had allowed His retributive justice merely to prevail, then the judgment which began with Jerusalem would have continued over the entire Gentile world, all the nations being under equal condemnation. We learn, however, from the Old Testament Scriptures as well as from the prophetic utterances of Christ, that it was
God's eternal purpose to choose out of all the nations of the earth a certain number ("the elect") for His kingdom (Isa. liii. 12, lx. 1-3, lxv. 1; John x. 16, xii. 32; Matt. xxviii. 19). If, however, Israel's tribulation had entangled the nations also in that judgment, none of those elect ones would have found time to be born, much less to become an object of salvation. Consequently the merciful God extended the time of His grace by offering to the Gentiles the same opportunity to hear and accept, or to reject the Gospel invitation of salvation, as He had done to the covenant people of the Old Testament. In order, however, to do that He cut His universal judgment, as the prophets had seen it, into two distinct parts or periods, in order to allow a fixed time to intervene for the gathering in of the elect out of the nations and tribes and tongues of the earth. Hence the words of Christ contain this remarkable truth that the judgment of the great tribulation, threatened in Matthew xxiv. 15, etc., would be restricted to Israel at the time of Jerusalem's destruction, and that the part cut off, the judgment of the nations, would be deferred to a later period; namely, until the gathering in of the elect of God had been accomplished. That this, and only this, is the opinion of Christ is evident from the inter-
interpretation which Luke gives to the words of the Master, when he writes, "And they [the Jews] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall he led captive into all the nations; and Jeru-
alem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, un-
til the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (xxi.
24). The nations must have and will have their full time of grace and mercy for the elect's sake, and then will set in their judgment, the part cut off.

In this connection, however, the question arises, whether that part of God's judgment which befell Jerusalem and the temple in the year 70 A.D., completed the great tribulation of which Christ spoke to His disciples. It is true, in that dreadful catastrophe over a million of the covenant people lost their lives; but Israel as such still survived. Besides, there is no prophecy on record in the Old Testament that with that fearful event God's chosen people should cease to be an object of divine concern. On the contrary, the prophets as well as our Lord unitedly hold to the Israel of judgment a time of gracious visitation yet (Zech. xiii.; Matt. xxiii. 38, 39). God's purposes with His chosen people are to outlast yet the tribulation of the year 70 and these purposes express themselves in a "scattering" and in a "gathering" of the Jews. The former Luke
expresses in the following words: "And they shall be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (xxii. 24).

This passage reveals to us the stern fact that through the judgment of the desolation of Jerusalem the surviving Israel was not to be utterly destroyed, but that it was to be placed vindictively into a permanent state of continuous tribulation. Being scattered over the earth and losing the land of its inheritance, Israel forfeited the ground for its national unity. The temple being destroyed and the city falling into the hands of the Gentiles, God's people also lost the center of their religious life and activity. The prophets of old had predicted such a condition, and the apostles of Christ take up this prophetic line of thought concerning the covenant people, and detail its destiny up to the time of the judgment of the nations or Gentiles. Aside from Daniel ix. 26-27, xii. I, II, it is especially Hosea, iii.-iv. that depicts this sad picture of his people: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king and without prince and without sacrifice and without pillar, and without ephod, or teraphim" (comp. ii. 9-19) Paul beholds and expresses the punitive hard-
ening in part that has befallen Israel "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. xi. 25). It is especially John who in his Apocalypse describes the tragic fate of the former chosen people of God. In chapter xii. 1-6 of that book he gives us in a few verses the outline of the history of the Jews from the time when out of their midst the Man-child, the Prince out of the house of David, the Ruler of the nations, was born. After His resurrection and ascension to the throne of power and government, Israel, the woman, has to go into exile among the nations (v. 6), for the symbolical term of 1260 days; or, from the destruction of Jerusalem till the time of the fulness of the Gentiles (comp. Rev. xi. 2-3; Dan. xii. 11; Luke xxi. 24). This banishment is divinely purposed and ordained, in order to preserve and maintain Israel in its prophetic ideality, v. 6. During these centuries the Jews are to go in board among the nations of the earth, until their deliverance shall come.

Reviewing this part of the Olivet discourse we have become convinced that the predicted event of the destruction of Jerusalem was to form the turning point in the history of Israel as well as in the calling in of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. The Lord's trial with the covenant people as to the acceptance of the
Messianic salvation had ended in a complete failure on the part of Israel; consequently judgment became inevitable. The Jewish dispensation was set aside for the present in order to let the times of the Gentiles or the Christian dispensation occupy its place. God's special dealings passed from the Jews to the heathen nations.

At the same time we have observed that Christ brings the eventful destruction of Jerusalem in the closest connection with the consummation of the present age. That punitive judgment was not to be the final one, as one part thereof is to be deferred until the full time of the probation and trial of the nations has completed itself. As soon as that is done, those cut-off days of the great tribulation will be ushered in. To this time and event Christ directs His final words.
V. THE TIME OF THE END.

Matthew xxiv. 25-28: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or, Here; believe it not. For there shall rise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; go not forth: Behold, he is in the inner chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west, so shall be the coming [Parousia] of the Son of man. Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Compare Mark xiii. 21.

The adverb of time "then;" at the beginning of v. 23 cannot point to the period of the besieging of Jerusalem, because the Christians at the holy city, according to v. 16, etc., were not touched by that siege. "Then" can only refer to the time following the close of those days of great tribulation that were to come in connection with the desolation of Jerusalem, v. 22; Mark xiii. 20. The purpose of Christ's warning, therefore, was to indicate to His disciples
that in spite of the overthrow of Israel no material change of the general course of things in Church and State would take place. After the downfall of Jerusalem, as well as before, His followers would find it necessary to guard against "falsifiers" of Christ and of Christianity. Such would continue to rise, and they have indeed risen during all the succeeding ages. It will certainly suffice to call attention to a few catchwords that in the process of time have obtained preeminence, as *Vicarius Dei*, Priesthood, Madonna, Monstrance, or general *Menschengeist*, Progress of thought, Evolution, etc.; all of which for the time being have falsely occupied the dignity and honor of Christ, the Anointed. Thus this warning runs parallel with that given before, when Christ was speaking in general about the deceptive, tempting times of persecution and apostasy, v. II-12.

When, however, our Lord, with reference to false Christ and false prophets, adds these words, "And (they) shall shew great signs and wonders," He evidently refers to a still more perilous time than He had been speaking of heretofore. And that cannot be any other time than that which He designated before as "the beginning of travail," and the time of "lawlessness." This, however, we learned
to be the time immediately preceding the consummation of the present world-age. The expression "great signs and wonders" at once maintains the presence of superhuman or demonical forces which at that time will be working, in order to "lead astray, if possible, even the elect." This extraordinary and extremely tempting deceitfulness Christ considers of such great importance that He adds the solemn warning, "Behold, I have told you beforehand." He, no doubt, meant to say, "Keep this unmistakable sign of the approaching end-time constantly before your minds." Comparing other parts of the Scriptures, especially II. Thessalonians ii, with the words of Christ, we must come to the conclusion that our Lord had reference to the development of the antichristian form of the world-power.

1. Antichrist's Reign and Rule (II. Thess. ii. 3, 4, 8-10).

"Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. He that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. . . . And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the
Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of His coming (Parousia). Even he, whose coming (Parousia) is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

(a) The Person of Antichrist.

As to the term Antichrist, it must be distinguished from "false Christ" (Pseudo-Christ, Matt. xxiv. 29), as the Antichrist nowhere is said to put Himself in the place of Christ. On the contrary he will set himself forth as God (II. Thess. ii. 4). Consequently he will be the incarnate adversary of Christ.

The idea that the name was not to be taken personally, but collectively, signifying the anti-Christian powers and manifestations in the world, has no Scriptural foundation. For, according to Daniel vii. 11-36, etc.; II. Thessalonians ii.; Revelation xiii. 1, xi. 7, xvii. 11, etc., a personal Antichrist is to appear in the days immediately preceding the return of our Lord. This is also plain from I. John ii. 18, where John is not, as has been asserted, dissolving the idea of a personal Antichrist into a plurality of such opposing spirits. On the con-
trary, he clearly distinguishes the many anti-
christs from the one; and the fact that there
were already many of a being and character
alogous to, and identical with, that of the
one, is proof to John that the last hour was at
hand, which would reveal the principal one to
come. The spirit of Antichrist manifested it-
self already in John’s time in the pernicious
gnostic systems of doctrines, although the per-
son of Antichrist had not yet appeared (1
John iv. 3; II. John 7).

(b) His Appearing and Character.

It is a noticeable fact that Antichrist is no-
where spoken of as being born, although, no
doubt, he will be an offspring of man. Paul
speaks of him as one who is to be “revealed”;
and he calls his appearing a “parousia” (I
Thess. ii. 3, 8, 9). But these are the very
terms by which that great event of our Lord’s
return is expressed. Antichrist will, therefore
just like Christ, come suddenly, unexpectedly,
his arrival will be a surprise. What is still
more important is the fact that his parousia
will be according to the working of Satan,
“with all power and signs and lying wonders.”
Although human, he will be nevertheless a de-
omaniacal product; which fact accounts for the
hideous forces that will reveal themselves in
extraordinary manifestations of superhuman,
The Parousia

(not supernatural) achievements, and deceitful, pernicious wonders.

Being of such an origin and endowment, it can well be conceived that his coming will be "with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing" (vs. 9-11). While they are surrendering themselves to him body and soul, he uses them merely as the blind tools to work unrighteousness, and to delude them into fearful errors which cause their own destruction (vs. 10-12). Being of such a character, it is no wonder that he is called "the lawless one," in whom that predicted emancipation from all law and order shall reach its culminating point (Matt. xxiv. 12). The generally increasing lawlessness, of which the Master in the passage just quoted spoke to His disciples, will find a fit personification in Antichrist, just as on the other hand the Son of man exhibited in His being, work and life the personal glory and righteousness of God. Antichrist is "the man of sin," "the son of perdition" (v. 4)—in him sin is the begetter, principle, and perdition his state, aim and end.

To this hideous character of the Antichrist, no doubt, Daniel is alluding already, when he describes the "little horn" as having "a mouth speaking great things, speaking words against the Most High" (chap. vii. 8, 20, 25).
(c) The Antichristian Tribulation of Persecution.

Rev. xiii. 7. "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." Daniel vii. 21: "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." Revelation xi. 7: "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them."

From such a pestilent adversary of Christ as we found in Antichrist, it must be expected that he will persecute the Lord's people. As he will set himself squarely against God and Christ, his very nature must demand the suppression of all those that in any way profess allegiance to either. He will institute, as we shall see, a direct antichristian rule and reign and will coerce it with all available power and means. Nothing therefore is more natural than that he should inaugurate a persecution of the Lord's people that will surpass as to fierceness and cruelty any previous martyrdom of the Church of God.

But here we are met with the widespread and confidently expressed opinion that all the saints of the Lord will be removed from this earth before the appearing of the Antichrist, thus
avoiding the great tribulation of the antichristian period. It becomes therefore necessary to examine this statement a little closer. For, if all the true and faithful followers of Christ are to be taken out of the earthly zone of oppression, there would be no occasion for an exceptionally fierce persecution on the part of Anti-christ.

There is certainly this one well established, indisputable fact that both Christ and His apostles have most positively predicted to all the disciples of the Lord Jesus suffering and martyrdom for His name’s sake (John xv. 20; Matt. v. 11, 12, x. 23; Luke xi. 49; II. Tim. iii. 10-12; Acts vii. 52; I. Cor. iv. 12; I. Peter iv. 12). Besides, there is not the slightest indication in any of these sayings of our Lord or His apostles that this universal persecution should ever cease at any certain time before the event of His coming again. Their words apply to all faithful Christians of all ages of the Church of God. And as for the removal of the saints from the earthly sphere of oppression we merely say this much for the present that there is evidently a very significant force in that part of our Lord’s great high-priestly prayer, where He is asking His Father on behalf of His disciples: “I have given them Thy word; and the world hat-
ed them, because they were not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from [in the Greek, "out of"] the world; but that Thou shouldest keep them from [out of] evil" (John xvii. 14, 15). The desire of Christ is not that any of His children should be removed out of this world, in order to escape the fiery trials of the hatred of the world, but that they might be kept by the power of God so as not to yield to the hour of temptation. The answer to this supplication of Christ in His state of humiliation He gives Himself from the throne of His glory, when He assures the church of Philadelphia, the church of the end-time, "Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, that hour which is to come upon the whole world to tempt them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. iii. 10). That is, when the spirits of the abyss or hell shall be let loose upon mankind, when a demoniacal mania in consequence shall seize the inhabited earth and thousands of Christians shall be drawn into the mighty stream of reckless apostasy (Matt. xxiv. 10; II. Thess. ii. 3), then the Lord will throw His mighty arms around the Philadelphia church to prevent it from falling into the snares of the tempters. But this very hour of
temptation of the end-time presupposes Philadelphia on earth yet while the lawless one is pressing onward the appalling falling away from Christ and His Church.

Moreover, every student of apocalyptic prophecy will observe an unbroken chain of persecutions of the saints of God predicted, stretching from the time of Daniel's visions to the moment of the Parousia of the Son of man. A few instances may suffice for a proof.

Daniel, for example, prophesies for the Old Testament saints a tyrant to arise after the third or Macedonian world-power, who would institute a reign of terror and would also destroy the holy people, or people of saints (Dan. viii. 23, 24). His rule and character correspond so much to that of the Antichrist of the New Testament that he has been called very justly the Antichrist of the Old Testament (Dan. xi. 31-38). Now, it is well known that this monster was Antiochus Epiphanes, and that those prophecies of Daniel became literally true during the martyrdom of the Maccabees.

But Daniel's vision concerning the tribulation of persecution did not stop with the Diadochian episode, just mentioned: it extended as far as the breaking down of all world rule and power. There was still a fourth monarchy, the
Roman, that moved into the apocalyptical horizon of the prophet. We have learned already the fact that the relation of the coming world-empires to the kingdom of God on earth appeared to Daniel in the shape and nature of symbolical wild beasts. And strange to say the fourth and last of those monarchies does not even find a fit representative among the wild inhabitants of the desert (Dan. vii.) The explanation of this singular circumstance is found in the fact that this nameless beast is not only "terrible and powerful and strong exceedingly," but that "it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it" (Dan. vii. 7). What else could it indicate to the prophet than the truth, that under the succeeding Roman world-power the people of God would experience more than ever before the fierce, devouring nature of the kingdom of this world? A glance at the history of the Church of Christ during the first three centuries furnishes ample proof of the truth of this indication. Names like those of Domitian, Nero, Caligula and others suffice to show the beastly nature of the inimical relation of the Roman world-power toward Christ and Christianity. It would require more space than we have allowed ourselves, should we enter into details of the immeasurable suffering which the Church of God had to endure from
this last world-power, the Roman, especially since the time the Romish Church has been using this still existing world-rule in order to suppress, if possible, every rising germ of true evangelical Christianity. Political junctures may here and there in our age restrain the spirit of persecution, but the nature of the kingdom of this world has not changed for the better, neither will it. For the vision of Daniel takes in also the end-time, and there he beholds the same cruel character of the fourth world-empire after the time it will be broken up into ten different kingdoms, out of which at last "a little horn" of unusual energy, vehemence, bloodthirstiness and raging hatred against God's people shall rise (Dan. vii. 8, 24). It is admitted all around that this little horn, which speaks words against the Most High, that is to "wear out the saints of the Most High," and shall think of changing "times and the law," is identical with that Antichrist who is described to us in II. Thessalonians ii. and Revelation xvii. That means then, that the tribulation of persecution of the followers of the Lord Jesus will continue through all ages to the very moment of the Parousia of the Son of man. Nay, more than that, this important vision of Daniel reveals to us the sad fact that the Antichrist of the end-time will outdo all his predecessors of persecuting renown.
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The same thought and truth of an uninterrupted continuation of oppression of the Church of God runs through the apocalyptic prophecy of the New Testament. For example, the seven churches of Asia Minor represent seven partly consecutive and partly contemporaneous conditions in the historical and prophetic life of the Church of Christ on earth. While Ephesus found its realization in the apostolic church and time, Smyrna corresponds exactly to the state of the Church of Christ from the year 100-325, Revelation ii. 1-11. But anyone characterizing these centuries, especially from the death of John till the reign of Constantine, would certainly choose the designation "Martyr-period of the Christians." The "Tribulation of ten days" predicted to the church-life of Smyrna can easily be traced in those ten distinct persecutions of the followers of Christ in the second and third centuries. And what is very significant in this connection is the fact that these ten martyr-oppressions were instigated by the following ten Roman emperors successively, namely, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Septimus Severus, Maximinus Thrax, Decius, Valerian, Diocletian. It was in each case the world-power that set itself against the Son of man and His Church. The church-form
of Pergamus, covering the time from 325 till about 800 A.D., it is true, is not exposed so much to outward oppression or attempted annihilations, as was the church-life of the preceding centuries; but Satan nevertheless made every exertion to ruin the body of Christ through internal temptations and corruptions. It was during this period that heathenish splendor, superstition, craving for miracles, worship of saints, iconolatry, etc., permeated the Christian Church. Ecclesiastical discipline found its grave, gross immorality seized the priesthood, and a sickly asceticism the monks and nuns. The throne of the Byzantines was characterized by murder, debauchery, injustice and bribery. No wonder that the Arian emperors turned their wrath against the adherents of Nicea and that the Eutychian monks of the Robber-synod persecuted the orthodox Christians of their times. Satan had his seat within the Pergamus church-form during the period mentioned; we must therefore expect that an Antipas, a faithful witness, meets his martyrdom in this stronghold of Satan (Rev. ii. 12-17).

It is, however, also the world-power of the end-time that appears to John in the attitude of severe hostility toward the true Church of God. It is admitted that the church-life, represented
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by Philadelphia, will last to Christ's return; because it shall be "kept from the hour of trial" which as a sifting temptation shall come upon the inhabited earth, before the Lord will come quickly (Rev. iii. 10, 11). The very fact that the Lord will graciously intervene on behalf of His saints is positive proof that they have to pass through the sore trying times of antichristian tyranny, lawlessness and persecution. This is also confirmed by the fact that the Lord will allow of the synagogue of Satan, a false Judaism and Christianity, of which Satan is the school-director, to torment the true saints of God (Rev. iii. 9). The church of the end-time, which, like Philadelphia, will be small, weak, poor, but also faithful unto death, has to pass through a great tribulation of persecution.

The same truth presents itself to John yet from another side. In chapter thirteen of his book he beholds in the beast out of the sea the world-power in its different variations and phases. The fact that this beast has the colors of those three beasts of Daniel vii., which represent the Babylonian, Persian and Macedonian kingdoms; and the fact that it rises out of the turmoil of the upheavals of the nations, is evidence that this fourth world-power is an earthly monarchy, which Satan uses as an in-
strument for the destruction of the Gentile Christians (xiii. 1, 2). Besides, the fact that this beastly kingdom has received authority to continue forty-two months or, as we have seen already, during that period which begins with the destruction of Jerusalem, and is to last till the Parousia (Rev. xii. 6; xi. 2) is proof that Daniel's fourth or John's sixth (Roman) world-power will continue in its hostile attitude towards the Church of Christ during its entire existence (Rev. xiii. 5-7). The very description of it, as we find it from verses 1-9, compels us to see in it, objectively and generally, the outspoken persecutor of the followers of the Lamb (Rev. xi. 2). How far the different features of these sad characteristics have come to be verified, every student of church and profane history will soon discover.

Moreover, it is in the highest degree astonishing that this animosity against true Christianity did not cease but rather increase yet, when the beast out of the sea identified itself with the beast out of the earth (Rev. xiii. 11-18). To all appearances the latter is not a pronounced political, but a spiritual power, which in lamb-like manner pretends to possess and to exercise that authority which Christ has and sways. And yet it enters into such a coalition with the existing world-power that the two ap-
pear and become identical. The one power finds in the other its ministering servant, its concentration and form of existence (Rev. xiii. 12-15). As to the fulfilment of this prophecy nobody doubts that it has reference to that spiritual power or false prophetism (Rev. xvi. 13; xix. 20) which in Popery (Romanism) has entered the political arena, holds the world-power in subjection to its plans and wishes, and will continue to the time of the formation of Antichristendom (comp. last references). But, what is very important for our purpose, is the fact that during this phase of the Roman world-development, in spite of the seeming Christlike power and rule, the true followers of the Lamb shall be persecuted most severely. How far, since the formation of popery, this has become true in every century and every Catholic country, it is not necessary to prove—the evidence is too overwhelming to need any verification. And as for the end-time, we find this false prophetism of the apostate Church in conjunction with the Dragon (devil) and the beast (the political powers that be), not only throwing the nations into a dreadful commotion, but also gathering the kings of the inhabited earth together for an onslaught against the Lord and His saints (Rev. xvi. 13, 14; comp. xvii. 14). In other words, the persecution of
God's people will last up to and during the antichristian period. For, there is still another point in John's eschatological visions that claims our attention.

It is not merely in general that he was to receive an explanation as to the destiny of the followers of Christ in their connection with subjection to the kings and rulers of this world in the coming ages; his attention is also very distinctly and particularly called to that period of time in which the world-power will have assumed its antichristian form and character. The vision of the beast out of the sea (chap. xiii.) gave him the necessary disclosure as to the beastly, yea, devilish, attitude of the world-power as such toward the Gentile Church of Christ during the present age. In chapters xi. 7, and xvii., however, he sees another beast which is not rising out of the sea, the turbulent waters of revolutions, wars and insurrections of the nations. This beast is coming up out of the abyss, i.e., out of hell, the abode of Satan (Rev. ix. 2, 11). The beast of chapter xiii. is taken into the service of the prince of this world and receives from him authority (chap. xiii. 2); but that of chapter xvii. is a symbol of a world-power which owes its origin and formation to a direct and immediate working of Satan—it is, therefore, the re-
sult of a demoniacal influence. It is still the same hostile world-power that has existed and worked iniquity before; but in this final form culminates and abounds all that of wickedness, atrocity, beastly nature, haughtiness and animosity against the Lord's saints ever existed within the different phases of the world-kingdoms. It carries the former politico-religious formation of world-rule on its back as a woman, that has proved idolatrous and faithless, and has made herself "drunken with the blood of the saints, with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. xvii. 3-6). Rome has shed martyr-blood for ages, and it will continue to do so to the very end of its existence. Hence the purple color of her apparel—the color of blood spilt for some time—together with scarlet—the color of blood freshly spilt. Unfortunately this beast out of the abyss, the eschatological world-monarchy, follows in the persecuting footsteps of the Babylonian harlot, hence it appears in the same scarlet color (chap. xvii.). Besides, Antichrist, heading this demonic power, together with his ten vassal kings, who head and foot surrender themselves to him, present a striking unification of purpose in their hostile attitude toward the Lamb and His followers (chap. xvii. 10-13).

This fully accords with the contents of the
vision of the Two Witnesses (Rev. xi. 3-12). Whether they are taken as two personal, powerful witness bearers to Jesus, or, what corresponds more to all the features of the vision, as the Law and the Gospel, the two accredited witnesses of Christ (John v. 31, 32, 39), in each case the high-handed suppression of all public testimony to Christ and His Word within the entire antichristian realm, is clearly indicated. That demonic achievement will be hailed with frantic rejoicings throughout antichristendom (chap. xi. 8-10). Finally this silenced testimony for Jesus will revive again with resurrection power in the hearts and mouths of God’s children, and will be rendered as secure as Christ in heaven (v. 11, etc.). But at this point the word of life will exercise judgment on the antichristian kingdom of this world, because it has become as corrupt as Sodom, and as bitter in persecution as Egypt of old. Thus the living word of Christ and its witness-bearers in the antichristian period will share the fate of the personal Logos even as to the time of the three and one-half years of His public work and testimony.

Summing up the foregoing, it is evident, (1) That the world-power as such will through all its different stages maintain a persecuting attitude toward the true Israel of God.
(2) These persecutions will become most bloody and cruel during the last phase of the kingdom of this world, when it shall develop itself into the demoniacal antichristian despotism.

(3) As this great tribulation of persecution will be universal throughout the final formation of Satan's rule and reign, all the saints of God have to pass through that time of fiery trial and testing.

(d) Israel at the Antichristian Period.

Matthew xxiii. 38, 39: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

While the destiny of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ during the antichristian reign of terror admits of no doubt, the question as to Israel's fate during that demonic period may well be asked. In order, however, to give a correct answer to this query, it is necessary to understand the precise nature of that judgment which befell Israel at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. It, no doubt, consisted of two distinct parts. According to Luke xxii. 24, etc.; Matthew xxiv. 2, 15, not only the city and temple should be destroyed,
but the covenant people should also be led captive into all nations. Besides, Jerusalem should become the object of Gentile rivalry and oppression. That certainly means that the Jews should lose their national coherence and independence up to a certain time. But when Christ in connection with His sore lamentation over Jerusalem’s unwillingness to receive Him, uttersthe words standing at the head of this paragraph, He means something more than the destruction of the city and the temple. He intended to say that His efforts, hitherto made to save God’s people from ruin, would now cease and the means of grace would be withdrawn from them for a fixed time. With this Paul fully agrees when he delivers himself as to Israel’s rejection thus: “For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. xi. 25, 26). Inasmuch as the covenant people have rejected their Messiah at His first appearance, He has judicially placed them in a state of unbelief and hardening of hearts, until His mercy shall return to them again (Rom. xi. 28-32). Since the days of Israel’s scattering single individuals among that people have been converted
to Christ; but that double curse, resting upon the Jews, it has been impossible to remove, and will be a matter of impossibility until the time decreed.

On the other hand it is just as certain that the time must and will come when that double curse, spoken of before, will be lifted up from the Old Testament people, now scattered throughout the nations. It would require a separate volume to consider all the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments that vouchsafe to Israel not only a deliverance from its present exile, but also its conversion to its rejected Messiah. We can touch upon only a few.

Our Lord in the very breath in which He prophetically places the covenant people under His punitive justice on account of the full measure of their sins, sets also a distinct boundary to that unrivaled tribulation. He asserts not merely the possibility of Israel’s conversion, but its certainty in the words, “Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” He was seeing then already the time when that rejected people shall stand side by side with those who shall welcome the returning Lord at His second appearing with a hearty Hosanna, while the rest will despairingly cry out to the mountains, “Fall upon us,” etc.
The Parousia

(Luke xxiii. 30; Rev. vi. 16.) In a like positive manner our Master makes the fulness of the Gentiles the fixed limit of the national dismemberment of the Jews (Luke xxii. 24). Israel's restoration as a people as well as its conversion to Christ and Christianity is positively asserted by Christ. Hence we can well understand why Paul, with the same definiteness, argues as to Israel's deliverance from its punitive rejection. He also limits its hardening to the same time of the fulness of the Gentiles, and is sure that then the broken-off branches of the Old Testament Olive Tree (the Church) shall be grafted again into the same Olive Tree and all Israel be saved (Rom. xi. 25-33). This assurance he bases on the Covenant and the election of Jehovah touching the covenant people, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

From the very apocalyptical nature of the Book of Revelation we must expect some further disclosure as to Israel's conversion and restoration. Especially all the more as the New Testament seer, in stating the theme of his book, "Behold, He cometh with the clouds," at once connects with that event the fact, "Every eye shall see Him and they which pierced Him" (Rev. i. 7). In the latter clause John refers to that Israel which in its rulers
had officially delivered its Messiah to shame and death. But it must not be overlooked that the author of Revelation states the relation of the Israel of the end-time to the Parousia of Christ in the very same language in which the prophet Zechariah (chap. xii. 10, etc.) had described the conversion of the future Israel by saying, “And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look unto Me, whom they have pierced: and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for his firstborn.” The “looking to” and the “seeing” of our Lord, referred to in Zechariah xii. 10, as well as in Matthew xxiii. 39 and Revelation i. 7 is, therefore, one of contrition and repentance, as is evident from the context. Consequently John, at the very outset, falls in line with the prophecy of Daniel and Zechariah as well as with that of our Master (Matt. xxiv. 30; xxvi. 64). He holds out prophetically to his readers the well-founded hope that at the time of the coming of the Son of man, rejected Israel will meet Him as a converted people.

The same truth is shown to John in his second vision. An episode between the sixth and seventh seals presents itself to him. At
the opening of the fifth seal the martyr-souls are crying for the avenging of their blood (Rev. vi. 9-11). At the opening of the sixth seal the day of this judicial avenging begins to dawn in terrible cosmic signs upon the enemies of the Lamb and His followers (Rev. vi. 12-17). But before the seventh seal, with its seven trumpets and seven bowls of wrath, is allowed to empty those destructive judgments upon a wicked world, John is made to see and understand that from these avenging visitations of God's justice the servants of the Lord shall and will be exempted. For this purpose John receives the episode between the last two seals, or between the dawn of the avenging and the act of the avenging itself. A given number of God's children are sealed, and that is done for the purpose of rendering them secure against the impending judgments to be inflicted upon the wicked (Rev. vii. 1-3). It is further evident that those thus exempted are at the time of their sealing living on earth, and that at the very moment of the approach of the Son of man (comp. Rev. vii. 12-17 with Matt. xxiv. 29, 30). As the 144,000 sealed ones appear in the vision as coming out of the twelve tribes of the Covenant people, it is clear that they represent the entire Christianized Israel of the end-time. But inasmuch as
this eschatological, Israelitic church is termed in general “the servants of our God” (v. 3); and as they are placed in opposition to the entire wicked world to be destroyed, from which they are singled out in order to be preserved, we are forced to the conclusion that the entire number of Gentile Christians of that time is merged into this Jewish-Christian community. That harmonizes fully with Isaiah liv. 1; Ezekiel xlvii. 21-23, where the prophet’s vision beholds Israel returned to the Lord and to the promised land. But there are also strangers (Gentile Christians) among God’s people, and “they shall be unto them as the home-born among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with them among the tribes of Israel”—be counted as one with them. This Jewish-Christian Church of the end-time will be developed again organically into twelve tribes, in accordance with the number of the twelve Patriarchs and the twelve Apostles. This New Testament Israel will be rendered secure against the impending crisis, rivetting the antichristian world.

Another important reference to Israel’s return to the Lord is found in Revelation xii. This chapter contains in a few verses an outline of the history of the Jews, past and future. The woman represents the natural Cove-
nant-people of the Old Testament; but not in its unbelieving, stubborn reality: as such it is a synagogue of Satan and has him for its school-director (Rev. ii. 9). It is rather Israel in its ideality, as it appears in the light and the eyes of that everlasting Covenant which Jehovah made with it. As such it possesses "the adoption, the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises." Of this ideal Israel "is Christ as concerning the flesh" (Rom. ix. 3-5, xi. 24-26). He is that "Man Child" (Mic. iv. 10; Isa. vi. 14), born of "the daughter of Zion" and destined to rule "all the nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. xii. 5; Ps. ii). This fact arouses the wrath of the old dragon, the devil, the prince of this world, against that child and His mother. He summons the Roman world-power, the name of Cæsar, again Christ (John xiv. 30, xix. 12); but the child is caught up unto God and unto His throne, after having through the deepest humiliation acquired the highest honor and claim to the universal reign and rule (comp. John xii. 31 with Phil. ii. 9, etc.; Matt. xxviii. 18; Ps. 8).

Now, as the Son of man is on the throne, and consequently out of the reach of the dragon, the same turns his fury against the woman, the Covenant-people of God. The devil by
his instruments incited the unbelieving Jews to the madness to call down upon themselves and their children the avenging blood of the crucified One (Matt. xxvii. 25). It was the same arch-enemy who drove that people to a reckless war with the Romans. And while besieged and in unspeakable distress the old serpent instigated the different parties against each other. Israel's utter ruin seemed to be sure and unavoidable, especially when it became evident that the exalted Christ through the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, avenged the iniquity of His people, committed on Calvary. But the Lord, ever mindful of His everlasting Covenant with Israel, made the woman to flee into the wilderness, the prophetic symbol of the exile (Hos. ii. 9-17; Isa. xl.; Luke xxii. 24). The nations of the earth form that "place, prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore [symbolic] days" (Rev. xii. 6). Since the days of Titus Jehovah is keeping the Covenant-people among the Gentiles (Gojim), in order to preserve its national identity, and to board it for future purposes. It must, however, be noticed that this time of Israel's preservation among the nations is divinely limited to 1,260 days. This is exactly the same time-period during which Israel shall be scattered
and Jerusalem trodden down of the nations of the earth (Luke xxi. 24; Rev. xi. 2, 3). When that time has come to an end, then Israel will be gathered again out of its dispersion. How that is to come about, John is beholding in verses 7-12.

During those symbolic 1,260 days Israel remains in its unbelief and obstinacy to accept Jesus as its Messiah. Consequently the old serpent, the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, has a wrangle with Michael and his angels, the patrons of Israel. This war is about the Jews, as is clearly indicated. Satan maintains his right as an accuser of the Covenant-people as long as it remains in unbelief. While the high priest, Joshua, the official representative of ancient Israel, appeared unclean, Satan was allowed to malign and accuse him (Zech. iii. 1-5). As soon, however, as Jehovah removed the sin and guilt from the high priest (v. 4), and robed him head to foot in pure linen (the righteousness of God) Satan lost his claim and case. The former part is expressed to John by the war mentioned, the latter by the casting down of the devil to the earth (Rev. xii. 8, 9). But how and by what will Satan ever be induced to quit his claim on hardened Israel? By no other means than by its conversion. This is
clearly shown in verses 10-12. After the casting out of heaven of the arch-enemy there is a threefold, great rejoicing in heaven. (1) Now is come the salvation of Israel out of its long tribulation of hardening of heart, and of banishment among the nations. (2) This objective deliverance means also an enlargement of the royal power of the Lord Jesus. (3) It also brings the kingdom of God a step nearer to its final realization (v. 10). The reason for these mighty eschatological events lies in the fact that "our brethren," the Jews, on earth, the same Jews who were the object of Satan's accusation and persecution day and night, "overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony." Certainly, the conversion of Israel to Christ the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, could not be stated in clearer terms. Symbolically that great decisive event appears to John as a war in heaven between Michael and the dragon, while in fact it will take place on earth, when Israel shall turn to its Messiah and confirm its allegiance to Him by a fearless testimony in a time fraught with cruel persecution. This maintaining of its faith forms a necessary part of the victory over Satan.

Nothing is more natural than that this Christian Israel, after its glorious conversion,
should become on earth the object of tenacious persecution on the part of the defeated devil (Rev. xii. 13). John, however, is comforted regarding this gloomy future of converted Israel. He is made to behold that the two strong wings of the judgment-eagle (Rev. viii. 13) are placed at her disposal to carry her into a place especially provided for her in the wilderness, i.e., among the nations (v. 14). This means that the New Testament Israel shall be gathered into a separate place. A comparison of our verse with Zechariah 14 renders it almost certain that Jerusalem and Canaan in general will be that place of gathering and shelter. Thus Christian Israel of the end-time will find a secure Goshen in the Land of Promise, as it did in the time of its fiery trials in Egypt of old.

Inasmuch as it is a certain judgment-eagle that is safely hiding the saints of the Lord, we are warranted in concluding that Israel's conversion will take place at or before the time when that eagle will bring about the three certain woes; or, about the time of the development of the fifth and sixth trumpet plagues (Rev. viii. 13, etc.). The object of this judgment-eagle in carrying converted Israel into this hiding place cannot be any other than to remove the saints of the Lord out of that judg-
ment zone on which He is to pour the bowls of God's wrath. Hence the purpose of this hiding is the same as that of the sealing in chapter seven, to wit, to render the servants of Christ secure against the great tribulation of judgment that is to come upon the wicked world. This securing is to last three and one-half times. As no definite measure of time is mentioned, we are restricted to the same measure which is mentioned in verse six of the same chapter, and that means days. The three and one-half times then would mean three and one-half days symbolically. That, however, is the exact measure of time of the reign of terror of the beast out of the abyss, or the Antichrist (Rev. xi. 7-11; Dan. vii. 25). This fact, therefore, makes it certain that Israel's conversion will take place at the beginning of Antichristendom.

Although Satan cannot entangle Christian Israel of the end-time into the trumpet-judgments and plagues, he is, nevertheless, allowed to persecute it throughout the entire antichristian period by demonic instrumentalities of that time. That song of rejoicing in heaven (chap. xii. 11) refers to this fact by magnifying the martyr spirit of "the brethren" out of the home-coming Israel, because "they loved not their life even unto death." How could it
be otherwise? When Israel, by accepting Christ, shall escape the power of its arch-enemy, then he will take care that the incarnate devil, Antichrist, will do his share to persecute converted Israel on earth to the utmost. When in verse fifteen Satan is said to send a drowning stream after the secured woman it cannot mean anything else than that Antichrist will send an overwhelming army against the saints of God in Palestine, in order to deluge them as with a flood. This figure of speech of a river representing a large army is well known to Scripture (Isa. viii. 8; Dan. ix. 26, xi. 22). He will even succeed in laying siege to Jerusalem and conquer Judah (New Testament Israel); but in the very moment, when he will attempt to eradicate the seed of the Lord, a miracle performed on the earth will open a way of escape to the hard pressed Israel (vs. 15, 16). This opening of the earth plainly refers to that cleaving asunder, by an invisible touch of Jehovah, of Mount Olivet which, like the Red Sea of old (Ex. xiv. 21-30) will form a safe passage for God’s people while it will prove death and destruction to the pursuing army of Antichrist (Zech. xiv. 4, 5; Rev. xii. 16).

Now, as to the time-point of Israel’s conversion, we gather from the preceding and other prophetic utterances, the following:
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(1) According to Hosea iii. 4, 5; Ezekiel xxxvii. 25, God’s chosen people, after having abided “many days without king: and without prince and without sacrifice and without pillar and without ephod or teraphim,” shall afterward return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto the Lord and to His goodness in the latter days.” This determination of time in the very last words quoted, it is true, is of such an indefinite nature that it generally comprises the entire Messianic time, as in Isaiah ii. 2; Micah iv. 1; Daniel x. 14. The first part of the words of Hosea, however, point to the time when “the many days” of the divinely determined religious deprivations of Israel have come to an end, and that will be in the end-time.

(2) Our Lord as well as St. Paul, in Luke xxii. 24 and Romans xi. 25, fixes the terminus before which Israel’s conversion is not to take place; namely, not before the fulness of the Gentiles has come in. With that event, however, the end-time shall develop (Matt. xxiv. 14). Hence the restoration of the Jews will take place during that time which precedes the Parousia of Christ. That time-period is also called “the last days,” or “last time” (II. Peter iii. 3; I. Tim. iv. 1; II. Tim. iii. 1; I. Peter i. 5), because they close the present æon.
(3) From Matthew xxiii. 39 and Revelation i. 7 we further gather the fact that at the Parousia of Christ Israel has repented and is hailing the Son of man, coming with the clouds, as its true Messiah. So the conversion of God’s chosen people falls between the beginning of the end-time and the appearing of Christ in glory.

(4) The sealing of the Israel of the New Testament against the impending great tribulation of judgment (Rev. vii.), and the exemption of the same Christian Israel from the last trumpet plagues clearly pointed us to the time of Antichrist. He will find Israel a converted people and for that reason will persecute it as well as all the rest of the saints of the Lord. We are, therefore, justified in the conclusion that the event of Israel’s return to its Messiah will take place at the beginning of the Anti-Christian reign of terror. A more definite time-point regarding this highly important event the Lord has withheld from us. We can only speak approximately. It is enough for us to know that Israel will share in the glory of the Parousia.

2. The Great Tribulation of Judgment.

Matthew xxiv. 28: “Wherever the carcase is there will the eagles [vultures] be gathered together.”
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The culminating demonic persecution of the saints of God during the Antichristian time must find its end. That end, however, cannot be anything else than a great tribulation of judgment for the persecutors. This Christ indicates in a sententious saying in the verse just quoted.

The word "carcase" (ptoma) is used in the New Testament of any lifeless body, slain or fallen. Thus of the body of the beheaded John the Baptist (Matt. xiv. 12); of Christ's body taken from the cross (Mark xv. 45); of the bodies of the two witnesses slain (Rev. xi. 8, 9). In Luke xvii. 37 for the sake of euphemism, the word "body" (corpse) is used. The main idea, therefore, is that of a corpse that enters upon the process of decaying. Since the genus falco of the eagles seldom go in quest of carrion we must here understand the genus vultur, which in great swarms follow the caravans of the East, in order to light at once upon a fallen camel to devour its corpse (comp. Job xxxix. 50). In this capacity the eagles appear as the executioners of an act of judgment upon the useless and offensive carcasses. Hence we meet them in Scriptures in connection with overwhelming armies that leave devastation in their march (Jer. iv. 13; Lam. iv. 19; Ezek. xvii. 3, 7; Hab. i. 8). The eagles
are, therefore, the fit symbols of divine judgment.

Now, Christ in the above saying no doubt refers to moral conditions that will bear spiritually a close resemblance to the physical state of carcasses, the nature of which renders a radical, forcible judgment of destruction necessary. And as He, each time (Matt. xxiv. 28; Luke xvii. 37) uses this proverbial expression in connection with utterances concerning His Parousia, He at once points to circumstances preceding His return that will present such a hopeless state of affairs that nothing but a thorough overthrow can furnish any relief. As He can have reference only to the conditions of the kingdom of this world at the end-time, He means to say that the development of this world will finally end in a complete bankruptcy, in a victory of evil over good, and thus bring about a decisive crisis. This crisis, according to Christ's assertion, will be co-extensive with the carcase-like conditions.

(a) The Carcase.

The question then is whether we have other assertions of Scripture to the effect that the final condition of the world-power will be so degenerate, intensively and extensively, that divine justice demands a radical destruction of such circumstances.
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From the above description of the Antichrist and his kingdom we learned the following facts:

(1) Antichrist will be Satan incarnated. (2) The deification of man will reach in him the highest possible point. He will put himself in the place of God and demand and coerce adoration of his person through his realm. (3) He will suppress every form of Christian life and activity within the boundaries of his kingdom. (4) The emancipation of the flesh will reign supremely. (5) Antichrist’s reign will be the highest tyranny and blasphemy.

Now, these circumstances, as they are prophesied, are such that divine justice would either cease to be such, or it must exterminate those demoniacal conditions in order to begin a new era—a further reform is out of question. The antichristian time therefore resembles morally a physical carcase.

In Matthew xxiv. 37, etc., and Luke xi. 26-29, Christ compares the days preceding His Parousia to the times of Noah and Lot. Now, as for the world as world in the time of Noah, Jehovah declared to that preacher of righteousness, that man had outgrown the strivings of His Spirit and had become “flesh.” Also that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the
thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. vi. 1-6). And as for the Sodomites, their degeneracy is characterized in the words of Jude 7, as having gone after strange flesh, including demoniacal carnality. Adding to this the above words of Christ, it is apparent that the Master wanted to convey the same idea, namely that every trace of spiritual instinct and desire had died out of the hearts of the people in Noah’s and Lot’s time. But He also wanted to lay stress upon the fact that in both instances those extraordinary conditions of moral corruption brought about the extinguishing judgments of the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Then comparing the conditions of the end-time with those of the time of Noah and Lot, what else can He intend to say than this, that a state of moral corruption will prevail before His coming that will render avenging unavoidable?

(b) The Eagles of Judgments.

It is not only an assertion of the Word of Truth that the Holy and Just One cannot but rectify the wrongs done to His children, it is also a universal observation that sin bears judgments in its own bosom, and inevitably moves toward a final crisis. The primitive in-
cidents of the Flood, the destruction of the Tower of Babel, the erasure of Sodom and Go-
morrah by fire, the scattering of Israel into As-
syria and Babylonia, and the devastation of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans—
these and other events of sacred and profane history are sufficient evidences that the Holy
One in Israel will not be laughed at continually, but will vindicate His holiness and jus-
tice against concrete wickedness. We must, therefore, expect that apocalyptic prophecy
knows something about eschatological judgments. And we need not marvel in the least
that these future judicial visitations appear just to such a degree severer and more radical as
the moral and political conditions of that time will reveal an exceptionally godless charac-
ter. It is a fundamental thought of Messianic prophecy that "the day of Jehovah," which
was to come with the appearing of the Messiah, would bring the final judgment, not only upon
hardened Israel, but also upon all the hostile Gentile nations, accompanied with terrible cos-
mic changes. In this respect the words of the prophet Isaiah (xiii. 6, 9-13) are re-echoed in
different variations: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh cruel, with wrath and fierce an-
ger; to make the land a desolation, and to de-
stroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the
stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble and the earth shall be shaken out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger" (comp. Isa. ii. 2; Ezek. xiii. 5, xxx. 3; Joel i. 15, ii. 1, 11; Amos v. 18, 20; Obad. xv.; Zeph. i. 14). Thus the appearing of the Messiah was considered pre-eminently as a *time of judgment*. It is therefore very natural that the New Testament term, "day of the Lord" in its eschatological sense, should attach to it the same feature of divine visitation; as we have shown in the Introduction.

While thus the idea of judgment throughout the Old and New Testament is inseparably connected with the Coming of the Messiah in the flesh as well as in glory, it is especially the apocalyptic prophecy which dwells more extensively upon the judgment of the end-time (comp. Dan. vii. 9, 10, 25, 26). And here it is again John to whom in a separate vision the deepest insight is granted into the character
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and extent of those divine punishments which, as judicial retributions, shall come upon the kingdom of this world in that time. He is permitted, not only to behold the ultimate development of the moral degeneracy necessitating such visitations, but also to state symbolically their nature. The entire seventh seal, i.e., the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath, concerns itself about the eschatological tribulation of judgment (Rev. viii. 1-9, 21; xvi. 1-11).

(1) The Symbolism of the Trumpets and Vials.

It will be observed that the first four trumpet blasts in all probability characterize general kinds of punitive afflictions which ever and ever befall the world, while the children of God do not suffer from them. The last three trumpets, however, are especially designated as " woes," and as significant precursors of the approaching of the day of the Lord (Rev. viii. 13). According to Revelation ix. 12; xi. 14 they indicate consecutive events—mark the repeated "hereafter." It is therefore evident that these symbols refer to punitive events which towards the end-time will assume a more aggravated, extraordinary character.

In the first trumpet-vision (Rev. viii. 7)
the products of the earth, the symbols of fruitfulness of godly life (Ps. i. 3; Jer. xvii. 8) are blasted. The ungodly will be deprived judicially of the very resources of spiritual life, and consequently will be stripped of every appearance of Christian character; while the followers of the Lord satisfy themselves with heavenly blessings (Matt. xiii. 11-12).

In the second trumpet vision (Rev. viii. 8-9) the sea, the symbol of the restless world of peoples (Dan. vii. 2, etc.; Rev. xiii; Ps. xciii. 4; Matt. xiii. 47) is partially poisoned by a mountain, the symbol of a kingdom of this world (Amos ix. 13; Jer. li. 25; Joel iii. 17, etc.; Ezek. xlvii). An extraordinarily wicked nation will, like a volcano, spread its poisonous influence over a great part of the Christian world. France at the close of the eighteenth century may be adduced as an example of modern times. The fearful apostasy for decades exercised a most pernicious influence upon the moral and religious development of Europe. Towards the end-time such disastrous influence by one nation over the rest will be extensified and intensified. But thanks to God, the eschatological character of Philadelphia will be preserved from "that hour of temptation" to irreligion and wickedness (Rev. iii. 10).
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In the third trumpet-vision (Rev. viii. 10-11) a star, the symbol of a spiritual Leader and Lightbearer (Dan. xii. 3; Rev. i. 16, 20; xii. 4) poisons a part of the sweet fountains and rivers, the symbols of spiritual blessings of Gospel life and truth (Isa. xl ix. 10; Ps. xxiii. 2; Isa. xii. 3, xlii. 20, lv. 1; Zech. xiv. 8). Through a prominent, influential apostate (or apostates) the channels of the waters of life will be corrupted to such a degree that spiritual death will ensue among the unbelievers to a large extent. During all the ages of Christianity such erratic stars have darkened the spiritual atmosphere of the Church of God and led thousands into spiritual darkness and ruin. But in the end-time the examples of an Arius, Voltaire, Renan, Strauss, Bauer, Darwin and the hosts of the radical higher critics of our own time will multiply themselves with demoniacally destructive and misleading effects. Those not retaining, and willing to retain, the love for the truth will be given over by divine ordination to the power of lying spirits and false teachers (Matt. xxiv. 5-11; II. Thess. ii. 11; Jude 11; 2 John 7). In the midst of these perilous times of doctrinal and religious aberrations the Lord will present to Himself an eschatological Church which will “keep His word and will not deny His name,” to whom therefore, an
open door for the spread of the Gospel is given
(Rev. iii. 8; I. Cor. xvi. 9; II. Cor. ii. 12).

This *judicial* withdrawing of the true light
is still more carried on during the blast of the
fourth trumpet (viii. 12). The *heavenly*
luminaries, the symbols of the *Gospel light-
bearers*, are darkened to a certain extent. The
blessings of revealed truth and of the salvation
in Christ are not, as yet, entirely taken away;
but they are judiciously withheld more and
more from those that have eyes to see, yet do
not see, have ears to hear, but do not hear.

Taking these four trumpets together, it
would seem as if they had reference to general
judgments to which the wicked world is con-
stantly doomed, while the Lord's people are
perfectly free from all that. The enemies of
Christ and His gospel of grace seem to be hap-
py outwardly, but inwardly they are stricken
of God with a curse. They are divinely given
over to the vindictive shutting up of all the
sources of spiritual life and peace (Rev. viii.
7); to the imbittering and poisoning of com-
merce and trade (Rev. viii. 8-9); to the sour-
ing of the enjoyments of life (viii. 10-11) and
the darkening and blighting of reason, science,
education and religion (viii. 12). Thus these
four trumpets contain a tribulation of judg-
ment of a general kind, which at all times is
prevailing among the children of this world; just as the first four seals contained physical
plagues of a general and ordinary kind, running through all ages. But just as those four
seals pressed forward, as we have seen, to extraordinary and miraculous vindictive events
in the fifth and sixth seals, so in the fifth and sixth trumpets judgments present themselves
that are of a decidedly different character from those of the first four trumpets. While the
latter are brought about by directly divine influences, it is noticeable that in addition to this
God makes use in the fifth and sixth trumpet of demonic instrumentalities, in order to
carry out His vindictive purposes. The devilish deceivers of the subjects of the kingdom of
Satan become at the same time the executioners of the punishments of the deceived.
Judgments will therefore come yet upon the kingdom of this world which will bear a direct
demoniacal character, and for that reason they will be more severe than those of the first four
trumpets.

This fact explains to us why a special eagle of divine judgment, flying in mid heaven, an-
nounces the blast of the remaining three trum-
pets with the solemn exclamation, "Woe, woe,
woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by rea-
sion of the other voices of the trumpet of the
three angels, who are yet to sound,” Rev. viii. 13. This at once characterizes them as eschatological judgments, preceding the Parousia. This extraordinary character of the plagues of the end-time is also the reason why special mention is made of the fact that these demoniacal visitations shall be executed “upon such men only as have not the seal of God upon their foreheads,” Rev. ix. 4. No doubt, reference is made here to the event of sealing the 144,000 of the New Testament Israel of God (Rev. vii.) and also to its safe carriage on the wings of the same judgment-eagle into a secure hiding place before the antichristian world-power (Rev. xii. 14). The Lord wanted His servant John to understand and to announce to all His followers that through some mysterious, miraculous act He would preserve His children from those demoniacal plagues that would befall the antichristian world at the end-time.

2. The Symbolical Meaning of the Fifth and Sixth Trumpet, Rev. ix. 1-21.

The symbolical meaning of the locusts in the fifth, and of the horsemen in the sixth trumpet as instruments of war and destruction is well known; compare Joel chapters one and two. But their monstrosity, and the fact that they
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proceed from the pit of the abyss, the present abode of the devil and his angels, stamps them at once as unnatural, hellish agencies. Hence they bring about a fearful aggravation of the despairing conditions of the preceding four trumpets. To hell and its fiendish hosts an extraordinary persuasive influence and coercive power will be given (divinely so) over the unsealed, deluded masses of the world-kingdom. At first, the wicked on account of the authority, order, humane, feminine appearance and charm of these manifestly devilish-human agencies, will be deluded and deceived; but afterwards they will feel the scorpion-sting. Then the domineering of the demons on earth will be such that every disguise is thrown off; they will openly torment, destroy and kill their adherents and cause them to spread destruction among themselves. This sad picture corresponds exactly to that of the antichristian kingdom.

Looking at the fascinating, and yet so deceiving, destructive nature of spiritism, Christian science, theosophy and even higher criticism on the one hand, and at socialism, anarchism and the social disturbances on the other, it would seem as if our Christian age was fast assuming something of a demoniacal nature. There is, no doubt, barbarism in Church, State,
society and the family setting in to such an alarming degree, that the question is asked here and there and all over, are we not rapidly nearing the critical point, when the agencies from the abyss will manifest their presence and power more than ever before?

3. The Seventh Trumpet, or the Seven Bowls of Wrath. Rev. xvi.

Just as between the sixth and seventh seals, so also between the sixth and seventh trumpets an episode intervenes. In both cases the episode brings about a detention of judgment. The seventh trumpet-angel stands ready to give the signal of destruction, but is interrupted by a "strong angel" with an open book (chapter v. 2). He moves from heaven downward, in the direction of the descending Judge. He is His herald, as is also indicated by his roaring voice (Amos i. 2, iii. 8; Hos. xi. 10), proclaiming the approach of the final judgments (Rev. x. 1-3). The appearance of this mighty messenger (v. 1, 2) upward or heavenward is that of the sun, surrounded by the symbol of mercy (Ezek. i. 28); while downward, toward the earth, it is that of a thundercloud; that is, mercy at the head, destruction at the feet. This gigantic stature treads land and sea, having power to execute judgments
over the entire compass of creation, v. 2. But before he begins his work of devastation, by a most solemn affirmation he indicates the first reason why he detained the seventh trumpet. During the fifth and sixth trumpets the judgment of that time did not bring repentance; but with the blast of the seventh trumpet the time of grace and delay (compare v. 6 with v. 7) will be for ever past, as that trumpet brings the final solution of the mystery of God (1 Cor. ii. 9). That is, it will bring the deliverance of the Lord’s people and the destruction of the kingdom of darkness (Rev. xi. 15, 18). In order to save possibly some of the impenitent yet before the absolute closing up of the time of grace, the merciful God brings in the events of the seven thunders, or seven judgment-actions that have for their object the awakening of the dead in sin. They are sketched in the prophetic twenty-ninth Psalm.

In Rev. x. 8-11 a second reason for the delay of the seventh trumpet is given. John has to take the open book of events out of the hand of the angel, eat and digest it. That is, he must not only read the open book, but must let the contents permeate his very being (Ezek. iii. 1, etc.). Then he is to prophesy the same not over or concerning, but before all mankind. The ensuing judgments shall be announced to
the kingdom of Satan, before they like hail storms befall the enemies of God. The seven thunder-events are the last, yea the very last, efforts of the merciful God, to save, if possible, some yet out of the doomed realm of darkness (Ezek. iii. 4; Rev. xxii. 16; i. 1, 4, 11).

The moment the seventh trumpet is to be sounded, the Shechinah (Ex. xl. 34; II. Kings viii. 10), the Old Testament symbol of the omnipotent workings of the ever-present theocratic Covenant God, fills heaven with its glory (Rev. xi. 15-19). The holiest of holy in heaven is entirely thrown open to John’s view (Rev. xv. 5, xi. 19). Seven angels with seven bowls, filled to the brim with the wrath of God, step forward to execute in a sevenfold manner the judgment of the seventh trumpet (Rev. xv. i, 6, xiv. 10). The Eternal One is about ready to destroy the creatures that recklessly have set themselves against His hand of mercy.

As to the nature of these six vial-judgments (Rev. xvi. 1-16), a close study reveals the fact that they correspond exactly to those of the first six trumpets respectively, with this exception however, that the former appear to be of a still more demoniacal, infernal character than the latter. Besides, their range is wider and their punitive effects are by far more intense.
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The reason for this exceptionally fierce and extraordinary character of these final judgment-plagues lies in the fact that they deal not, as the four trumpets do, with the world-power in general, but with that specific formation of it which bears the express antichristian stamp on it. Hence the first vial (xvi. 2) is not poured upon unsealed mankind in general but only upon those who have become subjects of the kingdom of the beast, by accepting that visible, distinguishing sign which stamps them publicly as adherents of Antichrist (Rev. xiii. 16). At the occasion of the third bowl reference is made plainly enough to the atrocities of the kingdom of the beast and the justness of the avenging plague (Rev. xvi. 5-7). The fifth bowl is poured directly upon the throne of the beast while the sixth and seventh are cast upon Babylon, or that Roman world-kingdom which the pseudo-lamb, the apostate church, raised again to honor and power (Rev. xiii. 11-18, xvi. 10-21). All these references point to the end-time, when the present world-power will assume the specific formidable antichristian formation.

In Rev. xv. two reasons are given why the vials of wrath are not at once cast upon doomed, sinful humanity. A last effort for the rescuing of some at least is first to be made by
divine mercy and long-suffering. From Rev. xvi. 9 it would seem as if the first four or five bowls of wrath had something of a purpose in them to lead still to repentance; but it is said of the men of that time, "They blasphemed the name of the God who hath the power over these plagues and they repented not to give Him the glory," Rev. xvi. 11. God's efforts are in vain.


The first trumpet symbolizes a punitive withholding of the sources of spiritual and physical well-being. The first vial, however, strikes the seat of the beast with pestilential sores. The mock-organism of church and State, which will rear itself in the place of the organism of the body of Christ, sinks deeper and deeper into internal rottenness and external misery. For a past fit illustration we may point to the different orders of the monks, which rose one after the other as a separate body inside the Catholic church. They not only opposed each other, but they also mutually disclosed their own rottenness and the dangerousness of their independent existence. But when such unbearable pestilential conditions in the body politic as well as in the
apostate church shall multiply and intensify—then they will prove a curse and a disastrous plague. Then the complete abandoning of the source of life and power will be visited with a state of godlessness that will insure the internal ruin of the whole.

The second trumpet indicates the fact that the international commerce and intercourse, instead of proving to be a source of international welfare, turns into a fountain of world-wide perilous tension between the social classes, of covetous misery, of torturing avarice, of increasing accumulation and concentration of wealth, of envy, hatred and bloodshed. The second vial brings judicially the same commercial and social convulsions, fermentations and putrefactions as punishments, but with a demoniacal intensity and sweep. The "sea" of restless world-commotions turns into "blood as of a dead man," into stagnant blood. The world-corruption causes world-stagnation.

But this appalling condition is but the logical consequence of the relation of the throne of the beast to the nations apostate. As an illustration we refer to the period from 862-1521. During that time the seat of Rome again and again inaugurated an increased political activity; but in each case an increased social, political and moral corruption was the sad con-
sequence. And this stagnation, without a single exception, always struck the seat of Rome first and last. It became not only the object of judicial judgment, but also the cause and instrument of severe visitations of its subjects. The same will be the case at the end-time, only in a still more formidable manner.

While the world as such in the third trumpet is punished, so that the sweet waters of enjoyments are turned into sources and streams of wormwood, of imbittering and torture, for the seat of the beast the intensification setting in with the third vial will consist in a turning into blood all those sources of enjoyments, pleasures, happiness and comfort. That is, they will produce a blood-thirstiness against the saints of the Lord to such a degree that they will be persecuted, martyred and tortured. But at the same time the seat of the beast, for exciting this demoniacal hatred, will be divinely compelled to drink the blood of its own adherents. That is, the fury against the followers of Christ will create such a blood-drunk-enness that it will finally turn against the beast itself and its main supporters.

As an example to the point we mention the demoniacal rage which in the 16th century perpetrated in France the most infernal atrocities against the churches of the Waldenses and
against the Reformed church in general, until it culminated in the unspeakable cruelties of the night of Bartholomew. But this tiger-rage gradually turned also against the priests as well as against the rulers. It found a fiendish pleasure in destroying life in a brutal, reckless way. Now, if such a bestiality will seize the godless masses of the antichristian times, how dreadful will be the condition of that lawless period.

In the fourth trumpet-judgment that which otherwise is designed to spread light, knowledge, refinement and education, will prove to be a source of mental and religious obscurcation, of error, leading further away from God. In the fourth vial-judgment, however, this judicial benighting proves to be for the seat of the beast, in addition to the impairing of enlightenment, an augmentation of the fire-heat. The perverted science becomes a source of fanaticism which will rage against the light-bearers of the Gospel, but will also turn against itself and become for itself a terrible torture. This condition will rise to a feverish mania which finds relief only in open blasphemy (Rev. xvi. 9). Although this may seem to be more a sin than a punishment, yet we must not forget that the Lord God punishes sin with sin, lying with mania. Besides, this inward
torture, as this plague plainly seems to be (v. 9) is directly attributed to the power of God (v. 9) and appears in the light of a punitive judgment.

The fifth vial (Rev. xvi. 10-11) is identical with the fifth trumpet and represents a single, though perhaps lasting event. We learn however, when we compare v. 2 with v. 10-11, that this infernal plague strikes the throne of the beast of the sea (the world-power) at that time when it has assumed that distinguishing sign which it receives from the beast out of the earth (the apostate church). That is, this judgment will set in at that time when the Roman world-power is concentrated in the seat of Rome (Rev. xiii. 16) and bears the distinct, well pronounced antichristian character upon it. At that period dark spirits from the abode of Satan will rise up and darken the seat of the beast, striking it with a spirit of blindness and fury. It will be inspired and possessed with unclean spirits of darkness. It will also become the curse of the seat of the beast, spreading darkness all around by sending forth hosts of demon-filled instrumentalities which will deceive, entice and finally torment the entire world, as far as it is adoring the beast. Its kingdom will be the object as well as the promulgator of this dreadful judgment.
As to the time, we found that it will last to the end-time reaching further yet than the time of Israel's conversion. That host of evil spirits will yet persecute the New Testament Israel, which, however, will experience that wonderful deliverance by being carried into a safe hiding place on the wings of the judgment eagle.

The sixth bowl of wrath again is identical with the sixth trumpet, portraying a still future single event. The demons of the sixth trumpet and of the sixth vial of wrath will belong to the kingdom of bold infidelity and revolution in its antichristian formation (Rev. xvi. 12, etc.). Their fury and wrath is especially turned against Babylon, or the seat of Rome. For the present and perhaps, for some time to come yet, these demonized armies of the subjects of the beast are restrained yet (Rev. ix. 14); but at the end-time the hour will come when their four angels or leaders (Rev. xvi. 12) will be divinely permitted to render powerless the Roman seat and subject it to them. They themselves will be rather inactive, merely wearing insignia, and passing the catchwords and directing and propelling those demonized masses which will spread hell and destruction about them. It is especially at that time that the threefold spirit of political self-
sovereignty, ecclesiastical pantheism and of blaspheming demonism will propel the masses before it. Preludes to such combined revolutionary tornadoes in church and State have shaken the Christian nations twice in the 19th century: at the time of the first Napoleon and in the year 1848. What will the end be?

After the seat of Rome has been made subservient to the demoniacal hosts (chapter xvi. 12), the nations are aroused to a war against the Church of Christ (chapter xvi. 14, 16). But inasmuch as the hosts of heaven confront them, their overthrow is like the rout of the Canaanites at Megiddo (Rev. xvi. 16; compare xii. 17, xix. 19; Judg. v. 19; II. Kings xxiii. 29; II. Chron. xxxv. 20, etc.). This defeat, however, is merely hinted at in the sixth vial (chapter xvi. 16); it fully develops in the seventh vial vision.

b. The Seventh Vial of Wrath, Rev. xvi. 17-21.

When the seventh vial is being poured out there goes forth a voice from the throne saying, “It is done.” The meaning of which is that the development of the seventh vial of wrath will bring about the end of the present age of the world.

A close study of this final vial discloses the
fact that its first part contains the annunciation of the fall of Babylon and the establishment of the antichristian kingdom proper, while the second part contains the judgment upon Antichrist by the Parousia of the Son of man.

At the end of the sixth vial we noticed a threefold unclean spirit of seduction unitedly bringing destruction upon mankind. But a political tyrannizing of the masses, a pseudo-prophetism that surrenders the Church to the masses and preaches pantheism, and a direct atheistic influence from the abyss is not calculated to work harmoniously together for a long time. Such a three-partite world-power cannot exist, it bears all the pre-conditions for its ruin in itself. Hence we are not surprised to find that the great city (Rev. xi. 8), this huge world-power, so doubtfully held together, is shaken by an extraordinary terrific earthquake, the symbol of revolutionary upheavals. A divine judgment rends asunder the demoniacal combine against the Lord and His saints. And is there anything more natural than that the political democracy should try to throw off that pseudo-ecclesiastical overpowering which up to that time will tyrannize the world-power? Babylon-Rome from that moment will cease to be the world-power; the sixth formation of the world-monarchy has come to
an end. The seat of Rome is but a woman (a harlot at that), who has to allow herself to be supported or tolerated by the seventh formation of the world-power, the antichristian. For out of this dreadful political commotion will rise the ten kingdoms as the independent seventh world-power (Rev. xvii. 12, 13). They have been forming since the time of the migration of the nations and are still existing as clay, a pliable mass, alongside of the Roman iron, permeating the same (Dan. ii.). But thus far they are not permitted yet to shake off the sixth Roman world-power, in order to rule and reign independently. That time, however, will come at the end-time, during the period of the seventh vial, when they will rise as an independent confederacy (Dan. vii. 24). This independence will last only for the short time of a mystic hour (Rev. xvii. 10, 12).

This seventh distinct formation of the world-power is used of God as the instrument to execute judgment upon Babylon, the mother of all uncleanness. That judgment is described most tragically in Rev. xviii. The apostate church becomes "a habitation of devils (demons), a hold (prison) of every unclean spirit and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird," Rev. xviii. 2. The very last trace of the nature of a church of God is punitively extracted
from her, and that is her judgment. When in Rev. xviii. 4-7 the Lord's people are admonished to "render unto her even as she rendered, and to double unto her the double according to her works," there is no doubt so much indicated that the saints of God are to take some part in the judgment coming upon Babylon (comp. I. Cor. vi. 2-3; Rev. xx. 4). This is, of course, not meant in any spirit of revenge, because that is foreign to the followers of the Lord Jesus. It is more likely in the sense of that refusal of the "five wise virgins," by means of which the "five foolish" were shut out from the marriage feast (Matt. xxv. 5-12). There is a possibility that when the ten antichristian kings rudely dethrone the apostate church and persecute her, her subjects awaken from their delusion and implore the secure children of God to receive them into their fold. But the time of grace for Babylon having run out, the avenging Judge induces His saints to leave the doomed church in the merciless hands of the ten executioners of her judgment.

It must, however, be noticed, that even during the short reign of the ten independent kings there arises out of the abyss that final third beast, the Antichrist, with his kingdom (Rev. xvii. 12; Dan. vii. 8). After the period
of that mystic half hour, this monster-king will demolish three of the ten kingdoms (Dan. vii. 8), will proclaim himself the world-monarch—the eighth, and the rest of the kings and kingdoms will subject themselves to him willingly (Rev. xvii. 13, 17). And as at the end of the same mystic one hour the fall of Babylon takes place that judgment stands in close connection with the rise of Antichrist (Rev. xvii. 16). The ecclesiastical harlot is put out of the way, in order to make room for the establishment of the kingdom of Antichrist, on a pure demonico-political basis, free from every religious or ecclesiastical influence. The ten kings and kingdoms have become of one mind with the Antichrist (Rev. xvii. 13; Acts xx. 3), and with him inaugurate now the war against the Lamb, the King of kings, and against His Church (Rev. xii. 15, xvii. 14, xix. 19), suppressing completely within their own realm every spiritual exertion and influence (Rev. xi. 7-10). With the fall of apostate Rome, and the establishment of antichristendom the welfare of the nations is falling into ruins, a radical subversion of all cultural and educational relations takes place, the most essential features of socialistic communism obtain sway, despotism characterizes all social and political movements, and the emancipation
of the flesh is ruling and commanded to rule supremely. This punitive development of the kingdom of darkness into its antichristian culmination forms the first part of the seventh vial-judgment. The second, of course, must follow in the Parousia of Christ Himself.

Reviewing the extensive field of the great tribulation of judgments we have found that for the most part they were of a spiritual nature, consisting in a judicial shutting up of the fountains of blessings of salvation, and in a corresponding sinking into moral and religious decay and wantonness. Finally we noticed a demon-like influence and power actuate and govern all social, political and moral conditions of the kingdom of darkness. This, however, logically necessitates the assumption that corresponding to these spiritual plagues, the world will suffer from physical, bodily ailments, diseases and evils which will become all the more wide-spread and intense as the moral apostasy shall grow in extent and fierceness. There are even indications that nature itself shall be transformed more and more into an instrument of divine chastisement.
VI. THE PAROUSIA, OR THE SECOND
PART OF THE SEVENTH VIAL

Matthew xxiv. 29-31: "But immediately, after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 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 on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

There are two things that make the Parousia of the Son of Man necessary: (1) The readiness of His waiting Bride to receive Him, and (2) the Parousia of Antichrist. Its object is therefore, the leading of the Bride to the supper of the Lamb, and the destruction of the anti-Christian kingdom. But how will His coming be?

In answering this question it becomes neces-
sary to pay the closest attention to the very words that describe to us this glorious event. Too many erroneous ideas have clustered around the Parousia which find no justification before a strict grammatical construction of the original. It will, however, not do to bring pre-conceived ideas, fond as they may be, to the word of truth and force it to expressions that are alien to the original meaning of the words. It is our business strictly to adhere to exegesis, and not to practice eis-egesis, i.e., to draw the meaning out of a word, but not to carry one into it.

1. The Time and Forebodings of Christ’s Revelation.

Notice how closely Christ connects v. 29 with v. 28 as to time. In v. 28 He describes the condition of things that will precede the Parousia, and in v. 29 He says, when this condition has set in then immediately after His coming would follow. When the kingdom of this world has become carcass-like and the angels of God’s punitive judgment-plagues have done their divinely ordained work of preparation for the day of the Lord, then, at once, without any further interval, the second portion of the last bowl of God’s wrath will be poured upon Antichrist’s kingdom, at the personal return of the Lord Himself. It is, there-
fore, evident that the Parousia will under no circumstance take place before the decreed end of the great tribulation of judgment which will find its culminating point in the personal appearing, reign and tyranny of the son of perdition. It is also apparent that no interval will elapse between the antichristian consummation and the arrival of Christ. With this fully harmonizes the express statement of Paul, II. Thess. ii. 3, 8: "Let no man beguile you in any wise, for it (the day of the Lord or the Parousia) will not be except the falling away come first and the man of sin (Antichrist) be revealed, the son of perdition—and then (when the restraint is removed) shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay (consume) with the breath of His mouth and bring to naught by the manifestation of His Parousia." (Notice the interchangeable use of Parousia and Day of the Lord in this chapter; compare also v. 2 with chapter i. 3, 8.)

Of course, this time-point given by our Lord and the apostle, is only a relative and comparative one, and does not give us any definite date whatsoever. The precise time of Christ's arrival is not for us to know (Acts i. 7); we are merely admonished to judge from the signs of the time as to the nearness of the day of the
The Seventh Vial

Lord (Luke xxii. 25-31). Hence every attempt to fix by astronomical or chronological calculation the exact year and day of Christ's Parousia must fail, as it has done hitherto invariably.

The Advent itself will begin with sudden tremendous cosmic changes (Matt. xxiv. 29; Isa. xiii. 10, etc.; Luke xxi. 25; Rev. vi. 12-14) that will closely follow upon the divinely limited or "decreed" end of the antichristian devastation (Dan. ix. 27). It will, however, not be a shower of meteors, but a cosmic catastrophe which will usher in the glorious arrival of the Son of man. The darkening of the heavenly lightbearers and the rolling up of the starry sheet of the firmament (Isa. xxxiv. 4; Ezek. xxxii. 7, etc.; Joel ii. 1, etc., iii. 4) is done for the purpose of making room for the rising glory of the sign of the Son of Man. When these celestial time-and-light-indicators have served their full seasons and signal purposes (Gen. i. 14), then they will surrender their light to the effulgent glory of the Lord, about to shine forth (Isa. lx. 19, etc., xxiv. 23; Rev. xxi. 11, 23). This temporal disuse of the same at the Parousia indicates the setting in of that era which finally culminates in the profusion of the glory of the Lord throughout the redeemed universe.
2. The Sign of the Son of Man.

On the background of the darkened heavenly worlds suddenly will flash up the sign of the Son of man in heaven (Matt. xxiv. 30). This appearing, according to the original, is one of lightning quickness, brilliancy and universality (Matt. xxiv. 27). Hence the Parousia itself is also called Epiphany or shining forth (I. Tim. vi. 14; II. Tim. iv. 1, 8; II. Thess. ii. 8). As for the "sign," it cannot be any other than the one which Christ has predicted as the only sign to be given to the unbelieving world—it is the sign of the prophet Jonah (Matt. xii. 39, etc., xvi. 4; Luke xi. 29). That is, when He will return from heaven, He will not appear in the "form of a servant" again (Phil. ii. 7) but as the "Living One" who was "dead" but who now is "alive unto the ages of the ages" (Rev. i. 18). At His second Parousia Christ will appear "apart from sin," as the risen Saviour and Judge (Heb. ix. 28). Thus He will be His own sign, but that in connection with those glorious surrounding circumstances which will accompany His descent from heaven. It is the same Son of man, who as such during His earthly career represented man and mankind in all the fulness of its misery, guilt and woe; but who, after having overcome the death-penalty, rose to glory and power and do-
minion for ever and ever (Matt. xxviii. 18; Phil. ii. 8, etc.). In this latter capacity the Son of man, the exalted Christ, will shine forth at His Parousia. Then the glory which has been given to Him on account of His deep humiliation will at once burst out into space and fill creation (Matt. xxv. 31; Luke ix. 26). At the same time this His own splendor will but reflect the eternal glory and majesty of His Father (Matt. xvi. 27; Mark viii. 38; Matt. xxiv. 30). It will, therefore, be an “appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus ii. 13). Coming, as we shall see directly, in the capacity of Lord and Judge, He is surrounded by myriads of His ever ready messengers, “the angels of His power, in flaming fire” (II. Thess. i. 7, 10; Luke ix. 26; Matt. xxiv. 31, xvi. 27, xxv. 31; Mark viii. 38).

The clouds of heaven serve Him as His chariot on His descent earthward, (Matt. xxiv. 30; Mark xiii. 26 etc.; Luke xxi. 27). On the day of His ascension heavenward the same clouds received Him and carried Him out of sight of His upwardly gazing apostles. But assurance was given to them that they should see Him come downward again “in like manner,” Acts i. 11. This coming on the clouds as the Son of man Daniel first beheld in a
vision (Dan. vii. 13); Christ then asserted it of Himself before His disciples and maintained it against His murderers (Matt. xxvi. 64). In each case however, where the expression is used, it has reference to the fact that the Son of man is coming from heaven to establish on earth His hitherto hidden royal power and dominion visibly. This final raising up of the promised kingdom of God is, therefore, an event that proceeds from heaven downward. Its origin is just the opposite from that of the kingdoms of this world, which rise out of the sea, i. e., out of the turbulent commotions of political evolutions and revolutions, even out of the abyss.

3. The Impression of the Dawn of the Parousia Upon the World.

Luke xxii. 25-28: “There shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting (expiring) for fear and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. . . . . But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh” (compare Rev. i. 7).

The extraordinary cosmic disturbance and
the sudden outbursting of the heavenly glory upon the entire universe at Christ’s coming cannot remain without a deep effect upon the inhabitants of the earth. According to Luke it will be of a double nature, and that in accordance with the individual relation which each human being will then sustain toward the arriving Lord. Among the unbelieving portion of Christendom—and that will be the largest—there will be “mourning, distress, perplexity” and “fainting for fear and expectation of the things which are coming on the inhabited earth.” This consternation and despair will seize “all the tribes of the earth,” it will be co-extensive with the apostasy of the nations. The conviction will then flash upon the mockers and enemies of the Son of man that after all there is a stern truthfulness in the despised word of life, and an awful reality in the story of the cross and the resurrection of that mythical Jesus of Nazareth. And, what is still more dreadful, the wicked have to “see” Him now, whether they are willing or not. In their utter hopelessness they do, indeed, implore the mountains “Fall on us,” and the hills “Cover us,” so as to hide them from the face of Him who has risen from His throne and is moving earthward (Rev. vi. 15-17). But the prophets as well as the Master and His apostles in uni-
son declare, “Every eye shall see him,” Rev. i. 7. During the time of grace the enemies of Christ have persistently and scornfully refused to consider Christ and His Gospel message; now, when He appears in majesty to judge, refusal will not obtain any longer—the veil must be removed, they have to see Him. All the different references to this all-important moment of Christ’s coming lay a peculiar stress upon the fact that everybody has to see the approaching Judge (Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7; Matt. xxvi. 64).

As for the disciples of the Lord, including of course converted Israel, the Master in Luke xxi. 28, connects with the statement of His “coming in a cloud with power and great glory” the significant exhortation, “But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh.” As soon as the first indication of the glorious return of the Son of man begins to flash upon their vision, the saints of God are requested to turn their eyes and hearts joyfully away from the earth and heavenward, because the hour of their full deliverance from all oppression, sin and imperfection, and of their transformation into the state of heavenly glory and blissfulness has come.

That Christ did not mean to restrict His re-
quest to rejoice to the saints then on earth, is plain from Revelation xix. Here we notice that the expectancy of all the inhabitants of the world of bliss at once crystallizes into a glorious vision. When heaven is filled with the anticipation that at last the moment for the Parousia of the Son of man has arrived, then a first hallelujah from the lips of the throng of martyrs and saints, having passed through the great tribulation of persecution, is sounding through the immensity of heaven (Rev. vii. 9, 14). They ascribe to "our God" the triumph of salvation, the accomplished deliverance of His people (Rev. vii. 10, xii. 10), the glory now to be bestowed upon His Church, and the power which is to manifest itself now in heaven and in earth (Rev. xix. 1-2); because righteous and avenging judgment has at last overtaken apostate Rome. With a second hallelujah the same chorus affirms what the angel had said (Rev. xviii. 21-24), respecting the irrevocable fate of the harlot-church (xix. 3). To these two hallelujahs the twenty-four elders and four beasts, the symbols of the Church of God in the Spirit and of the creative power pervading the universe, add a confirmative amen, sending out the third hallelujah. This threefold song of praise has for its object the complete judgment on Babylon.
There is, however, still another saving act of God that needs praise and laudation. Hence a voice from the throne requests all God-fearing servants to praise our God. In answer to this solemn exhortation "a voice of a great multitude and the voice as of many waters, and the voice of mighty thunder say, Hallelujah; for the Lord our God the Almighty reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad and let us give the glory unto Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure," Rev. xix. 5-8. Now, inasmuch as this fourth hallelujah is not expressly said to be sounded in heaven (which is the case of the three preceding ones) we are justified in assuming that it goes up from the saints of God on earth. Their time for rejoicing and praising has now come and they are no longer holding back their jubilant songs and laudations as soon as the first ray of the effulgent epiphany of Christ strikes their vision. Their joint hallelujahs are roaring up to heaven like the voice of that rolling, restless sea of peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues (Rev. xvii. 15); and like those thundering judgment-actions of God that are to precede shortly the Parousia of the Son of
man (Rev. x. 3). Thus while the saints in heaven rejoice over the fall of Babylon (Rev. xix. 1-4), the instrument of their own oppression and martyrdom, the Church of Christ on earth is shouting her praises, because the Lord our God, the Almighty, has now publicly seized the reign, what He will do at the time of the destruction of the beast out of the abyss (Antichrist) (Rev. xi. 15-17). They are also exceedingly glad, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, the time for the permanent uniting of the waiting Bride with her heavenly Bridegroom. The hallelujah of the saints of the Lord comprises therefore also the final part of the seventh vial, the glorious Parousia with its sublime purpose. Thus heaven and earth, in unison, greet with rejoicing the first indication of the return of the long hidden Lord and King.

4. The Nature of the Parousia.

Matt. xxiv. 27, 43, 44: "For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming [Parousia] of the Son of man. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore, be ye
also ready, for in an hour that ye think not
the Son of man cometh” (compare v. 50-51; 1 Thess. v. 2-6).

As for the first passage, there are three
specific points contained in the words of the
Master. His Parousia will be (1) from heav-
en, as the lightning takes its origin thence.
(2) Suddenly, momentary, without any pre-
vieous public or general pre-admonitions, warn-
ings or threatenings. Only to His followers
Christ has given certain signs, indicative of
His coming; they are, however, not noticeable
to the blinded eye of unbelief (Matt. xxiv.
32, 33, 38, 39). (3) The Parousia will be
universally visible, spreading in one single
moment an entirely new light and conception
over the entire world. The coming of the
Lord will not find its fulfilment in any lasting
spiritual development, nor will it be locally
confined to the uninhabited “desert,” nor to the
secret “chamber”; nor will it be “here” or
“there” (Matt. xxiv. 23, 26); it will be a sud-
den omnipresence, an effulgent appearance.

In the second passage (Matt. xxiv. 43, etc.)
Christ does not so much allude to the sudden-
ness and universality of His appearing, but
rather to its unexpectedness, and to the un-
certainty of its time-point. When apostate
Christendom will consider herself safe and se-
cure, the Lord will come suddenly and unawares as the thief does.

That this, and only this, is the meaning of Christ is plain from His own explanation in verse 43, etc. "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not." For the same reason of unexpectedness Christ says to the church of Sardis which had lost its watchfulness and sunk into carnal security, "If therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Rev. iii. 1-3.

A third time the Son of man reiterates His proverbial saying, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" (Rev. xvi. 15). This warning Christ will sound when that threefold demoniac deception at the time of the sixth vial of wrath has allured the nations of the earth into such a general recklessness that even the saints of the Lord need to be admonished as to the nearness of His arrival, and the necessity to watch, lest He come quite unawares.

Now, in the sight and light of these plain statements of Christ Himself, it is exceedingly strange that the opinion should have obtained such a large support that our Lord in using
this expression. "like a thief" should have meant that He would come *secretly* for His saints, entirely *unobserved* by everybody besides them. Aside from the fact that the Parousia is everywhere represented as being public, open, visible to all creatures, Christ's own commentary on the expression purposely excludes every secrecy from the manifestation of His appearing. Among the warnings of the Master against three snares, besetting His disciples as to His coming, the second one is that it might be a *secret* one (Matt. xxiv. 26-27). The returning Lord will not alight in "the wilderness," in a far-off lonely place; nor in the secret "chamber" unobserved. His coming will be as the lightning. In each of the cases mentioned our Master is very careful to guard His words against any misinterpretation; because He does not fail to add by way of explanation, "Watch therefore, because ye do not know *what hour* the Son of man will come." The unexpectedness of His Parousia furnishes to him an earnest motive for His followers to keep constantly on the watch-tower. And according to Revelations xvi. 15 that warning note will especially sound forth at the time when His coming will be imminent, so that the saints of God may not be found asleep.

In support of the idea that the Parousia of
Christ for His saints would not be visible to the wicked of that day, the companions of Saul at the instant of his conversion on the way to Damascus are quoted (Acts ix.). It is asserted that that resplendent appearance and the voice was noticed only by Saul. In reply to this it might be said, even if that was a fact, it is not clear how that should prove or even explain the effect or non-effect of the epiphany of Christ upon a certain class of people. The two occasions certainly do not stand in the relation of a type to an antitype; nor is there any innate similarity between the two. But is the above assertion founded on facts? Not in the least. In Acts xxii. 9 Paul himself, narrating to the Jews the wonderful incident, says expressly, “And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.” Then Luke in Acts ix. 7, asserts, “And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, because they heard a voice (or a sound), but did not behold a man.” Taking the two reports together, the following facts are undeniable: (1) Those companions of Saul saw the shining forth of the unusual light at noontime, without being blinded by it as Saul was. (2) They also heard a voice or a sound, but they did not understand the articulated words of that
voice, because they were not intended for them. (3) They saw no person, neither is it said of Saul that he did. Now, it is rather strange that these plain and obvious facts should have been construed into an argument asserting the secret appearing of Christ in great splendor for only His followers.

In addition to this, it is evidently the purpose of the Lord to force the wicked at His coming to see His saints in His company at His return. He has no cause whatever to hasten away with His chosen Bride in the night. We shall see directly that He intends to make a public ostentatious display of His meeting His redeemed bridal Church on that glorious occasion of His Parousia.

5. The Purpose of Christ's Revelation.

Matthew xxiv. 31: “And he shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Comp. Rev. xx. 4; I. Cor. xv. 23, 51-54; I. Thess. iv. 16, 17; II. Cor. iii. 18; Phil. iii. 21; II. Cor. v. 4.)

We have noticed already that the Lord will come also “in the glory of the angels.” The armies in heaven will follow the faithful and true “upon white horses, clothed in fine linen,
white and pure,” Rev. xix. 14. Now, that cannot mean that they accompany the Son of man on His earthward march merely to round off the royal procession. Angels are ministering spirits and serve two purposes: (1) “To do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation,” Heb. i. 14. (2) To execute God’s judgments upon the wicked, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, Sennacherib and others. We will find that for these very purposes they appear in the royal march of the Son of man.

(1) The Gathering Together of the Saints.

It is not only the express wish and desire of Christ, but also an object of His great High Priestly prayer that His disciples or bond-servants should be with Him, where He is (John xii. 26, xvii. 24). But from John xiv. 3, it is clear that He connects the receiving of His children unto Him very closely with His coming again. For here, after speaking of the mansions which He is preparing for His followers, He continues, “I come again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” The being with the exalted Christ shall not find its full realization until the time of His Parousia.

The ingathering itself shall proceed from all
sides (four winds) of the globe, and will span not only the ends of the earth but also the ends of the heaven (Matt. xxiv. 31; Mark xiii. 27). It will be thorough, complete—not one of the Lord’s own will be left behind or overlooked, whether he be in the immensity of heaven or at the remotest angle of the earth. No doubt Christ, when contrasting the ends of heaven and the ends of the earth, had in His mind the fact that at the time of His coming a vast number of His followers would have been gathered already into Paradise, unclothed however, not being in possession of their glorified bodies. On the other hand there will also be multitudes of the Lord’s servants still living in the flesh on earth, waiting and praying unceasingly for the Master’s return. Now, it is evidently the Lord’s purpose to gather those two kinds of His followers not only “together,” but “unto Himself” also, when He will be revealed. But their different local, corporeal and spiritual condition requires a different procedure, in order to bring them together with the Lord in their final glorified state. The sainted souls need their promised immortal, incorruptible bodies, in order to be complete, while the saints on earth must get rid of their sinful, natural flesh and blood first, before they can inherit the kingdom of God, now to be estab-
lished in glory (1 Cor. xv. 50). Now, we find that exactly in accordance with these different states and conditions the gathering of the saints unto the Lord at His arrival will be accomplished. There are therefore three points that claim our attention: (a) The raising of the dead. (b) The changing of the living and (c) The rapture of both classes.

a. The Raising of the Dead.

It is a uniform doctrine of the New Testament that those that fall asleep in Jesus live with Him in heaven and are, therefore, blessed (Matt. v. 12, xix. 21; I. Cor. xv. 47; II. Cor. v. 1; Eph. vi. 9; Phil. iii. 20; Col. i. 5; Rev. xiv. 13). Their condition is however that of a resting, of a Sabbath rest, not of an outward activity (Rev. xiv. 13, vi. 11; Heb. iv. 9). The departed saints of the Lord are positively blessed, but their state is not all around complete. The soul lacks its body, the organ of self-manifestation, externally; it is, as Paul puts it, "unclothed" (II. Cor. v. 4); because the body is sleeping in the dust.

Now, to this imperfect condition the Son of man will make an end. Then, as we are told, the dead in Christ will be raised; that is, the body having become dust by going through the process of corruption, is transformed from
a mortal into an immortal, and from a corruptible into an incorruptible, from an earthly to a heavenly state of existence, being united again with the soul in order to present a complete object of redeeming grace and power (I. Cor. xv. 42-50; I. Thess. iv. 15, etc.; Rev. xx. 4, etc.). With reference to this all-important event the following must be noticed:

(1) It will take place amidst, or perhaps, in consequence of a tremendous penetrating trumpet-sound, which is ascribed to the arriving Lord Himself as well as to the accompanying angels (I. Thess. iv. 16; Matt. xxiv. 31). The resurrecting voice of God will penetrate all the resting places of the sleepers of the dust.

(2) This raising of the dead is strictly confined to those that have “fallen asleep in Jesus.” That is, to the saints of God of all ages before and after Christ, as is evident from the following passages, I. Cor. xv. 22-26; I. Thess. iv. 13-17; Rev. xx. 4-14. This resurrection at the time of the Parousia is uniformly spoken of as a resurrection “out of” (ἐκ) the dead; consequently it is only a partial one. For this reason it is even called an “out resurrection” (ἐκανάστασις), Phil. iii. 11. And as there is the resurrection of the remaining dead to follow at a later period, this one is also called the
"first" (Rev. xx. 4). Although Christ speaks in more general terms of the resurrection of the dead, He clearly distinguishes the resurrection of life from that of judgment (John v. 29). Hence from His generalization no argument against the assertion of two distinct resurrections, taking place at different time-points, can be adduced.

(3) This raising and transforming of those that are Christ's at His coming is done for the purpose of preparing them in an appropriate manner for their being gathered together unto the coming of the Lord.

b. The Changing of the Living.

The same preparing is necessary for the saints of God living on earth at the time of the Parousia. For the apostle emphasizes with respect to the gathering of God's people unto the Lord the fact that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," I Cor. xv. 50. Their earthly condition requires, however, a different process. Not having passed from physical life to physical death, they cannot be raised from the dead. And yet they must be found in exactly the same spiritual and physical state of glorification as the former class. It is however not God's purpose that they should pass in the ordinary manner through
the process of dying, consequently He changes them. Of the manner in which that is to be done, we have absolutely no conception. The apostle calls it in one place a being "clothed upon," or a "swallowing up of the mortal by life," II. Cor. v. 4. In I. Cor. xv. 53 he describes this mysterious change thus: "For this corruptible must put on immortality." Taking these different expressions together, it is evident that they establish the fact that in the moment of the change indicated the sinful, corruptible and mortal ceases entirely, and the same glorified condition sets in as we have noticed in those that are to be raised from the dead. It is a transformation of the earthy into the heavenly and that "in a moment, in the twinkling of the eye at the last trump," I. Cor. xv. 51-52. But inasmuch as it is divinely appointed unto man once to die, this momentary translation of the earthy saints of God must contain in it an equivalent to the unalterable law of death. Those that are left unto the coming of the Lord are permitted to swoop, so to speak, like lightning through the gate of death into the glory of the world to come. Why they will be thus favored, we may perhaps gather from a glorious vision of John in Revelations xix. 7, etc. After the fall of Babylon, when the red beast out of the
abyss, Antichrist, is reigning and ruining, it is by special grace of God given to the bridal congregation of the Lord to “array herself in fine linen, bright and pure.” That is, not in the robe of the righteousness and perfect satisfaction of Christ—that she had received long ago—but in complete holiness, manifesting itself perceptibly and outwardly (compare Rom. v. 18, viii. 4). While on the one hand under the regime of the man of sin the religious and moral condition of the children of this world will assume a decidedly demoniacal character, the state of holiness of God’s people will shine already with heavenly luster in and through them. This deliverance from sin in the body of the flesh stands in close relation to the promised changing of the saints at the coming of the Lord. There will be but one step necessary for them then in order to pass out of a state of relative perfection into that of complete holiness and glory. The Lord Jesus by special grace and power makes His Bride ready for His arrival, and by means of that momentary change He puts the finishing touch to her royal, heavenly bridal attire. And this being-made-ready of the Church of Christ is in itself an indication of the momentary appearance of the Lord in glory (Rev. xix. 11, etc.; xiv. 14, etc.).
As to time, this changing of the living will not precede the rising of the dead; though there will be no interval of any account between the two distinct events (I. Thess. iv. 15). Neither will the transformation of the two classes occupy more than a moment. The lightning-like appearing of the Son of man and the twinkling of the eye during the changing indicate momentary and quick action (Matt. xxiv. 27; I. Cor. xv. 51-52).

c. The Rapture.

I. Thess. iv. 17. "Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (comp. II. Thess. ii. 1).

In John v. 28, Christ says: "The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth." This cannot but mean that the different resting places of the departed saints of God will be the scenes of the resurrecting power of the Lord at the time of His Parousia. In other words, this earth will be the place on which the transformation of the terrestrial bodies into celestial will be performed. The same is the case with reference to the changing of the living, that also takes place on earth. Both the risen and the changed children of God will be on mother
earth when the Lord comes in glory. This is the reason why the apostle speaks of a being "caught up together" of all that will be transplanted into a state of glory when Jesus comes. He sends them His own chariot, on which He arrives, the clouds (Matt. xxiv. 30; I. Thess. iv. 17), and His despatched messengers, the angels, form the celestial escort (Matt. xxiv. 31).

The preliminary place of meeting of the Lord with His Bride is not heaven, but the "air," a space between heaven and earth. There seems to be a special purpose in this. The Son of man is not only coming for His saints, in order to unite them with Him, He also purposes to come with them (I. Thess. iii. 13). They are to accompany Him on His earthward descent, and that for a double purpose. (1) They are to share publicly, before a wicked world, in the great glory in which He is coming. His Parousia is to be a manifestation of His royalty, honor, power and majesty. In like manner His redeemed people will be "manifested with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4; I. Thess. ii. 19). (2) Christ comes in order to execute judgment on the antichristian world; in this judgment the glorified saints are to participate. Their very presence with the coming Judge is in itself a condemnation of their enemies and
persecutors (Jude 14-15; compare Zech. xiv. 5). Up to the moment of the Parousia the Lord’s children have to share with Him rejection, derision, persecution and martyrdom; but now the tables are radically turned—they are openly installed as assessors in judgment and as co-regents with the Son of man.

This convocation of the Lord’s saints is also called the harvest of the grain (Rev. xiv. 14-16; compare Joel iii). This symbolical language is familiar to Scripture. The whitening of the field is to Christ a symbol of the spiritual harvest which He beheld coming among the Samaritans (John iv. 35). The harvest itself is a symbol of the ingathering of the just into the heavenly garner (Matt. xiii. 39, etc.).

The context of the passage in Revelation places the harvest into the very end-time, forming the second part of the seventh trumpet. The one performing the harvesting of the sheaves is described as sitting on a white cloud and “like unto the Son of man,” verse 14. These two designations at once reveal Him as the Lord Jesus coming on the cloud for judgment (Matt. xxiv. 30). With reference to the three special angels accompanying Him (v. 15, 17, 18), He occupies the same leading and commanding relation which the
first rider does to the subsequent three riders in Revelation vi. 2. When this Son of man on the cloud is requested by an angel coming from within the heavenly sanctuary, to thrust in the sickle (v. 15), then that fact indicates that He receives the message from the One on the throne, that now "the hour has come which the Father has set within His own authority" —the winding-up hour (Acts i. 7). The in-gathering of the grain, therefore, is in full harmony with the will of the Father (John v. 27, 30), because "the harvest (the children of God) has become overripe," in the heat of the great tribulation of persecution. There is hardly any doubt that the harvesting of the earth (grain) signifies the gathering together of the saints, dead and living, at Christ's Parousia; because it is the Son of man Himself who executes it. Besides, just that feature which otherwise also involves the idea of judgment—the threshing—is not mentioned here, only the gathering of the sheaves is spoken of (compare Isa. xxv. 10; Jer. li. 33; Amos i. 3; Micah iv. 13; John v. 24). This is evidence that the idea of judgment is foreign to this part of John's vision, while it governs the second part very plainly (verse 17, etc.).

With reference to the time of the rapture a very wide-spread view maintains that that
event would occur before the tribulation or the development of the antichristian period. Thus the raptured saints would not live on earth to see and experience that time of distress. Later, at the Revelation, Christ would come with His elect to judge the antichristian kingdom. For a support of this opinion reference is made especially to Luke xxi. 28, 31; II. Thessalonians ii. 1-2; Revelations iii. 10.

Regarding the first passage it is said that verse 28 referred to the time of the rapture, “When these things begin to come to pass”; while the thirty-first verse referred to the Revelation: “When these things have come to pass.” Then, “these things” in both verses are said to refer to the tribulation, to its beginning and to its close.

Now, as to the translation “when these things have come to pass,” we are unable to find a grammatical foundation for it, because the Greek participle is found in the present tense, just as the verb is in verse 28. Hence the various translations and the R. V. rightly render it, “when ye see these things coming to pass.” Verse 31 is referring to the same time-point as verse 28, and there is therefore no time for the tribulation to intervene.

Besides, “these things” which Christ mentions in both these verses do not refer to the
great tribulation. From verses 24-27 our Lord enumerates the following “things” to occur at His coming; signs in sun, moon and stars; distress of nations in consequence thereof; the shaking of the powers of heaven and earth. At the same time the “coming of the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Then He continues, “But when these things [just mentioned] begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draweth nigh.” Hence we are unable to see how “these things” could mean the tribulation, as these cosmic changes are never styled so. It is true, the “distress of nations” at the appearing of Christ forms a part of the great tribulation of judgment; but it forms its very end and not its beginning; because the Parousia makes an end of antichristendom, and that means an end of the tribulation of persecution as well as of judgment. Consequently the rapture, plainly referred to in Luke xxii. 28, 31, takes place after the days of the great woes.

In II. Thess. ii. 1, 2 the “gathering together unto Him” is rightly referred to the rapture at the moment of the Parousia of Christ. But it is said that the Day of the Lord in verse two did not apply to the same event, but to a later period, to the Revelation. The tribulation is
then again to develop during the interval between these two time-points.

Now, any Greek or English scholar will admit that verse 1 contains what grammar calls the *protasis* of a sentence while verse 2 contains the *apodosis*—the one the beginning, the other the close of the sentence. The objective noun in both parts of a sentence is, however, the same. But according to the above view the apostle begins his sentence in verse one by beseeching the Thessalonians concerning the Parousia of the Lord and the rapture connected with it, without telling them what he beseeches them about. In closing, however, his sentence, he beseeches them concerning another, far-off event, the Day of the Lord, or the Revelation, that they should not suppose that it was at hand already. Now, we confess, we cannot consider that great Greek scholar, Paul, capable of committing such a blunder. We hold, therefore, with all the best commentators that the apostle uses the expression Parousia in verse one and Day of the Lord in verse two promiscuously of one and the same event. It is further evident from verses one and eight that at the time of the Parousia the rapture of the saints as well as the destruction of Antichrist takes place. Consequently the development of the antichristian kingdom
must occur before the rapture and not vice versa.

In Revelations iii. 10 the Lord promises to the church at Philadelphia that He will keep her from the hour of trial or temptation. This hour of temptation is said to be the great tribulation. And as that hour is to come upon the whole world it is averred that the Lord could not keep His elect from it except by taking them away from the earth. But there is this to be said against this view:

(i) The original for “trial” or “temptation” has never the meaning of tribulation, but that of testing or enticement to sin and apostasy. The latter is the only admissible one here. At the time of the historical Church of Philadelphia such a temptation proceeded from the synagogue of Satan in their midst; but Philadelphia proved firm and faithful, not denying the name of Christ (Rev. iii. 8-9). At the time of the Philadelphia church of the end-time such an hour of enticement to apostasy will come over the inhabited world, as Christ and His apostles have foretold (Matt. xxiv.; II. Thess. ii.). And as that eschatological church, like that of the days of John, will “keep the word of Christ’s patience,” He will also keep His saints from that universal hour of seduction by giving them sufficient grace to over-
come the enticement, to stand firm in the faith and to defy the tempter, though it be amidst persecution and martyrdom. It is not in accordance with Scripture nor in harmony with the general experience of the saints of God through the ages past, that the Lord should remove His tempted children out of the sphere of temptation to apostasy. But it has ever been the habit of Christ to endue His followers with supernatural power to stand like rocks in the days of sore trial and testing as to their faithfulness. Why He should make an exception at the time of the last tribulation is more than we are able to explain from His Word.

The view that the Gathering of the Saints will be coincident with the Parousia rests on plain Scriptural testimonies. Out of the large number we refer only to the following:

(1) There is no evidence in Scripture that the Lord's Coming would extend over a longer period of time, of which the expressions Parousia, Apocalypsis, Epiphany and Day of the Lord will form different stages of its development. These terms refer altogether to but one momentary event, and the accompanying circumstances of that event exclude the idea of a prolonged, extended period of time. The expressions "coming like lightning," "quickly," "suddenly," "unexpectedly," chang-
ing the living in "the twinkling of the eye," and others, designate short, decisive and momentary work. There is a good reason why the Return of the Lord is designated in the fourfold manner mentioned. His fourfold relation to the event of His Coming makes the different terms necessary. As He will come in order to have His children ever present with Him, His coming is an arrived presence or Parousia. He comes to unveil or disclose His present concealment, hence the designation Revelation or unveiling. As that unveiling will be amidst a brilliant diffusion of His glory and power throughout the entire universe, it rises to an Epiphany. And as the day of that glorious event is Christ's special day, around which every past, present and future time revolves, it is called the Day of Christ, His day, the day of the Lord. There is, therefore, nothing in the meaning of these terms or in the accompanying circumstances that would indicate the elapsing of a longer period of time.

(2) The gathering of the saints unto the Lord is invariably mentioned in connection with the generic term "Parousia" (Matt. xxiv. 3, 27, 30, 31; Mark xiii. 24, 27; I. Thess. ii. 19, iii. 13, iv. 15-17; II. Thess. ii. 1; I. Cor. xv. 23, 51, 52; II. Peter iii. 11-14; I. John ii. 28). Hence it must not be treated independently of
that event, but always in connection with it. The Rapture does not form an occurrence for itself; but one of a group, incident to the event of the Parousia. It is, however, very important to notice that these accompanying circumstances, making up the event of the Lord’s Coming, are always enumerated in the same order, which must appear to everybody very natural and logical. Thus, for example, Christ by the use of the preposition of time “after,” definitely fixes the time of the event of His Parousia not before but after the tribulation. This positive declaration of the Master ought to be decisive (Matt. xxiv. 29, xiii. 24). When the prophesied great tribulation of the antichristian period shall have reached its culminasion as well as its decreed end (Dan. ix. 26, 27), then, immediately after that moment, the Parousia will take place, and how will it come about? The first indication of the momentary approach of the Lord is signalized by celestial and terrestrial changes and disturbances (Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24; Luke xxi. 25, 26; Is. xiii. 10; Ezek. xxxii. 7; Amos v. 20; Acts ii. 20; Rev. vi. 12-14). As soon as the heavenly light bearers recede, to make room for the glory of the approaching King, His sign becomes visible to the inhabitants of the earth, and they see Him, terror stricken, de-
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scend on the clouds earthward (Matt. xxiv. 30; Mark xiii. 26, 27; Dan. vii. 13; Rev. i. 7; Luke xxi. 27). At the same time (tote, "then") His angelic messengers accomplish the Gathering of the Elect unto the Lord, out of heaven as well as from the earth, under the sound of trumpets and rejoicing (Matt. xxiv. 31; Mark xiii. 27; Luke xxi. 25-28; I. Cor. xv. 52; I. Thess. iv. 16).

Paul, in exactly the same manner, teaches that the apostasy and tribulation of antichrist-tendom had to appear first, before the Parousia of Christ could take place (II. Thess. ii. 3, 8; compare Matt. xxiv. 11, 12, 24). And as for the time of the Rapture he states it in the same order of sequence as Christ does (I. Thess. iv. 16, 17). A careful study of the Book of Revelation reveals also the fundamental thought, underlying all the different visions, that when the antichristian time of the little horn or the beast of the abyss has reached its demonic height of wickedness, tyranny and tribulation, then the Lord will make His sudden appearance on the clouds, lead His Bride to the marriage supper and destroy the kingdom of Satan (Rev. i. 7; vi. 12-17; xiv. 14-20; xix. 1-9; xx. 4-6). There is, therefore, a perfect agreement between Christ and His apostles concerning the sequence of events,im-
mediately preceding and coming to pass during His descent from heaven. When this order is strictly adhered to, it is impossible to remove the Rapture out of its divinely fixed place.

2. The Destruction of the Antichristian Kingdom.

II. Thessalonians ii. 8: “And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to naught by the manifestation of His coming [Parousia].”

Revelation xix. 19-21: “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image: they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone: and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came out of his mouth.”

We have noticed before that during the anti-Christian tyranny the eschatological Jewish-Christian Church of God will be made the ob-
ject of bitter persecution. The demoniacal army of the red beast will make the attempt twice to destroy the saints of the Lord in their place of safety in Palestine; but it will be swallowed up by the miraculously cleft mountain of Olives (Rev. xii. 16; Zech. xiv. 4, 5). Other extraordinary events will also reduce the kingdom of darkness (Rev. x. 3, etc.; xviii. 6; xi. 13). But these are only preliminary judgments to the final crisis of the beast out of the abyss. We learn further that at the glorious appearing of the Son of man with the hosts of heaven, Antichrist in his delusion and rage will offer resistance to the coming Judge. Together with his vassal kings he will throw himself against the King of kings in His final triumphant entry. But the Lord Himself on that great, decisive day shall slay Antichrist with the breath of His mouth—with a mere command—and defeat him utterly, but also that false prophet, the spiritual head of the apostatized Church, who rendered such important service to Antichrist. As these two persons are the spiritual and mental organizers, leaders and commanders of the demonic realm of darkness they have to suffer a common fate. The angels accompanying the royal Victor at once bind and cast them into the lake of fire, the final abode of the damned.
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Their fate means endless torture that comprises not only mental, but also physical and soul-agony (verses 20; xx. 15; John v. 29). On account of the exceptional position and terrific power wielded by Antichrist and the false prophet, their judgment at the Parousia of Christ is final—they are at once doomed to everlasting damnation. Of their adherents and subjects it is merely said that they are “killed,” meaning that they enter the realm of the dead to await their doom on the day of final judgment.

This destruction of the antichristian kingdom is otherwise represented by the harvest of the grapes (Revelation xiv. 18-20, xix. 21) just the reverse of the harvest of the sheaves. That this is the case is evident from the fact that the grapes are thrown “into the wine-press, the great, of the wrath of God” (Rev. xiv. 19). Besides, it is an angel, one of the executioners of God’s judgment, who is gathering the vintage and treading the wine-press of divine fury. Moreover, that heavenly messenger has not only “power of the fire,” the symbol of God’s wrath (Deut. iv. 24; Heb. xii. 29; Ps. xi. 6, etc.), but he also comes from that altar on which the incense of the prayers of the saints for avenging is mixed with the heat of consuming justice and retribution of
God (Rev. xiv. 18; compare chapter vi. 9, 10 with viii. 1-5). At the hour of Christ’s Parousia those prayers find their answer; and the judgment of destruction of the antichristian people stands therefore in close relation to the fire of God’s wrath, finally kindled by the unceasing appeal of the saints for the rectification of all wrongs (compare Gen. iv. 10). The promise of Christ that He at His coming would speedily avenge His elect finds now its complete fulfilment (Luke xviii. 7, 8).

The carnage of the wine-press of the fierceness of God’s wrath (Rev. xix. 15) results in a bloodstream of 1,600 furlongs (chapter xix. 20; Joel iv. 13, 14). As this number is evidently symbolical, it is the product of forty times forty. But forty is the symbolical number of punishment or judgment (Num. xiv. 33, etc.; Judg. xiii. 1; Ezek. xxix. 11, etc.); forty times forty must be the number of intensified and multiplied judgments. When we consider all the circumstances connected with this judgment on Antichristendom, we certainly must admit that the inhabited earth will not have seen anything before that could compare with that scathing visitation as to extent, quickness and effectiveness.

This part of John’s vision concerning the double harvest is based on Joel iv. 12-17. While
Jehovah is erecting His throne in Zion, outside the city in the valley of Jehoshaphat the vindictive wine-press of God is trodden. Hence John also beholds the same scene as taking place "outside the city." This harmonizes with Zechariah xiv., where the final battle of the Lord with the nations to be destroyed shall take place around Jerusalem. There the great "decision" shall fall, the final separation of the wicked from the elect be accomplished, and the Lord's victory over all His enemies become manifest. As has been stated before, in this judgment the caught-up saints will take part (Dan. vii. 9, 22; I. Cor. vi. 2, etc.; Rev. xx. 4).

6. *The Results of the Parousia.*

Even a superficial consideration of the developments of the end-time must convince us that the Parousia of the Son of man is an event of far-reaching consequences. There is a decisive character attached to it that we do not notice in any other occurrence within the history of the kingdom of God on earth. Radical changes will then usher in an entirely new era in the life of the Church of God. The present world-age comes to a close, the future sets in on an entirely new basis and with a completely changed prospectus. The Parousia affects es-
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sentially heaven and earth. This transforming influence is noticed (1) on the existing world-power; (2) on the Saints of God; and (3) on the formation of the kingdom of God on earth.

1. The Effect on the World-Power.

Daniel ii. 44: "It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms."

We have found already that the antichristian realm will be banished from the earth at the coming of the Lord. As that political development will be the last or final one, its destruction must mean the cessation of all world-power as such (Rev. xix. 20, 21). The stone cut out of the mountains without hands will break in pieces the iron, brass, the clay, the silver and gold of that colossal image by which Nebuchadnezzar beheld the ever-changing and deteriorating development of the kingdom of this world in the ages to come. The Parousia of Christ will bring about this radical change, so that beyond its time-point a resuscitating of the ever-existing world-rule and power is and ever will be impossible. For, with reference to the final development of the kingdom of this world, the antichristian prophecy declares emphatically that at the time of its culmination "judgment shall sit and they
shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end" (Dan. vii. 26). The kingdom of sin and Satan has simply ceased to exist then, though sin will continue. With that, of course, every organized form of persecution has come to an end. After the destruction of the antichristian realm the basis for open hostility is removed.

This extermination of antichristendom, as far as earthly existence and power is concerned, is, however, not the only disastrous effect of the Revelation of the Son of man. Our Master as well as His apostles connects with it consequences of an eternal nature. According to the explicit assertions of the Word of Truth this judgment on the antichristian kingdom will surrender every subject thereof to everlasting condemnation. We have found already that Antichrist and the false prophet will be “cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone” (Rev. xix. 20, xx. 10). Not any less is the doom of all the adherents of Antichrist sealed definitely at the arrival of the Son of man, though the final sentence is deferred. In this respect the Apostle declares, “If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven
with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed in that day" (II. Thess. i. 6-10). In like manner Christ in the parable of the tares among the good seed asserts the certainty of condemnation of the wicked at His coming in the following words, "As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be in the end of the world: the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xiii. 40-42). It is worthy of notice that in these and other instances (Matt. xxv. 31, 41, 46) our Master invariably brings this preliminary judgment of the wicked into close connection with His coming in glory. This is proof that that event will forever settle and determine the doom of all those who during the last demonic development of the kingdom of Satan in word and life have manifested his
workings. As they have defied divine grace and forbearance, divine justice overtakes them now.

2. On the Elect.

I. Thessalonians iv. 17: "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

The gathering together of the saints in the air is but a means to an end. Attention has been called already to the fact that the Lord at His Parousia intends to recognize His children as His own by a glorious public demonstration. Also to the fact that they on that occasion shall act the part of co-judges over the antichristian world. A third purpose needs to be mentioned; namely, the fact that from that moment the relation of the caught-up saints will be radically changed. Before that event one part of them enjoys the bliss of heaven in the capacity of departed souls, while the other part is sharing on earth the vicissitudes of life and the cross of Christ. At the moment of the Parousia both classes are transformed into the complete state of glorification and heavenly existence. That means then that the Lord Jesus is visibly present with them and they all "shall see Him, even as He is" (I. John iii. 2; compare II. Cor. iii. 18).
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The return of the Lord will therefore become a Parousia, *i.e.*, an arrived presence, as the original indicates. The earthy, mortal, terrestrial, sinful, incomplete estate of the saints has fallen; they are all “transformed into the same image (of the glory of the Lord) from glory to glory.” Consequently they now, with unveiled face, are beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (II. Cor. iii. 18). Thus their celestial condition forms itself for them into an ever-presence of the Lord with them. As this happy union of Christ with His Church is effected at the instance of His Bride meeting Him in the air, this glorious event is also called the *marriage supper of the Lamb*.

The symbolical expressions “Bridegroom,” “Bride,” and “Marriage,” occur very often in both Testaments. In the old they generally designate the tender Covenant relation between Jehovah and His people Israel. In the New Testament they characterize the same relation between Christ and His Church. The latter appears then as the Bride, comprising, however, merely the believing portion of the visible Church or the Elect of God (Hos. i.-iii.; Isa. liv. 4, etc.; John iii. 29; Matt. ix. 15, xxv. 1, etc.; Mark ii. 19; Luke xii. 36). It is, however, an important fact that Christ, when using these figurative terms of Himself and His
redeemed people, is using them mostly in connection with His Parousia. Thus, for example, in the parable of the marriage feast of the king's son there comes the moment when the king calls to account those that have rejected his gracious invitation (Matt. xxii. 1-14). A still closer relation to the appearing of the heavenly Bridegroom runs through the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. xxv. 1, etc.). Christ, no doubt, has allusion to that blissful meeting that will take place between Him and the saints in the moment of His descent from heaven. It is, therefore, easily to be understood why at the near approach of that eventful day all the multitudes of the elect on earth, waiting for the arrival of their Lord, exhort themselves, "Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife had made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. xix. 7-9).

The marriage supper of the Lamb evidently signifies the unspeakable, never-ending blissfulness which will follow that visible union of Christ with His bridal congregation. And when the mediating angel (Rev. i. 1) commands John to write: "Blessed are they which
are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. xix. 9), he means to say that this is such an all-important truth that every child of God must experience and know it. For, in every case where John is requested to write, the command has reference to a truth of the utmost importance. In this instance those are called blessed who will live to see the arrival of Christ; because they will be eye-witnesses of the triumph over the antichristian kingdom, which forms the prelude to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. xiv. 17-20). Their salvation therefore, is assured to them, and the Lord wants them to consider and believe this glorious fact firmly. The survivors of the Parousia of Christ enjoy the same blessed assurance which those do who before that event, faithfully pass through the bloody tribulation caused by the red beast (Rev. xiv. 13). They are declared "blessed from henceforth," i.e., from the moment of their martyr-death, while the living saints pass into glory from the moment of the appearing of the Son of man. So these two eschatological beatitudes indirectly express the same truth which is contained in I. Thessalonians iv. 15, “For this we say unto you, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep.”

Revelation xx. 2: "And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."

It would be indeed strange, if after such a thorough judgment on the antichristian world-domain the dragon who "gave to it his power, and his throne, and great authority" (Rev. xiii. 2) should himself go unpunished. Being the prince of this world, he must at once lose that position as soon as his kingdom on earth, reared and sustained by him, is destroyed at the Parousia. And that is what apocalyptic prophecy is revealing to us (Rev. xx. 1-3). A brief survey of the sphere and time of Satan's activity will be helpful to understand his doom at the end-time.

Since the dreadful disaster of the fall of man the abode of the arch-deceiver is such that from there he can exercise his nefarious influence over the whole earth (Rev. ix. 1, etc.; Eph. ii. 2; I. Peter v. 8; Job ii. 2; Eph. vi. 12); yea, as that of an adversary and accuser even in heaven (Rev. xii. 3, etc.; Job i. 6). Of course, this Satanic influence is not absolute, but dependent on divine restriction. As for the different periods of time Satan appears (a) with reference to Israel, as long as it remains
in unbelief and hardness of heart, as an *accuser in heaven* (Rev. xii. 1-9). He claims that people as His own, as long as they refuse to accept their Messiah. (2) Towards the saints of God, especially the sharers of the cross of Christ, he ever appeared, and ever will conduct himself as a relentless enemy *on earth* (Rev. xii. 17, 9, 10). This enmity will develop itself into a demoniacal rage against the Lord’s children in the eschatological time (Rev. xii. 17, 9-16). (3) As for the children of this world he ever is and remains a liar, deceiver and destroyer. Especially at the end of the present age he will succeed in rearing on earth a demoniacal kingdom, headed by the usurper Antichrist. That monster will be, as we have seen, an incarnation of Satan (II. Thess. ii.). But inasmuch as the Son of man has come to destroy the works of the devil (I. John iii. 8) that judgment must befall him at that time when his infernal activity will have succeeded in erecting on earth a demonic realm, headed by a demonic incarnation. Then the revelation of the man of sin and lawlessness will necessitate the counter-revelation of the Son of man. The result will be the destruction of apostatized Christendom, and in connection with it the shutting up of the mental originator of it, into a prison in the abyss. According to Revelation xx. 2 this
close and effectual confinement will last one thousand years. The result of this custody and restraint of the devil will be his inability to tempt and deceive those that are living on earth during the one thousand years of his imprisonment. The inhabitants of the earth in that time will therefore live under entirely different spiritual circumstances from those which have surrounded mankind from the fall up to the time of the Parousia. The effect of that fact must show itself in a most marked manner.

4. On the Millennial People.

Micah iv. 1, 2: “But in the latter days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it.”

Attention has been called already to the fact that the New Testament divides the New Testament time into “this age,” and into “the age to come.” We further noticed that the visible Return of the Lord Jesus in glory forms the dividing line of these two distinct epochs of time. Now, in Revelation xx. 2 of that coming age of the world a thousand years are measured off especially during which certain events are to take place. After that the end
of all time is to come about, because time will then be swallowed up by eternity.

With reference to these special thousand years, marked off by divine measurement and ordination, thus far every effort to begin the same from any other event than the Parousia of Christ has signally failed and must fail. In other words, every attempt to make the coming of the Lord Jesus in glory post-millennial is fatal and rests either on a preconceived, fanciful notion, or on a perversion of plain, convincing Bible assertions. It is further a very noticeable fact that the Church of the Lord Jesus, as such, has ever believed in a millennium after the arrival of Christ. As for the ancient Church we merely refer to Just. c. Tryph. 80; Tert. adv. Marc. iii. 25; Iren. v. 33 and others. Whether, however, the thousand years are to be taken literally as civil years, or as a mystic period of time, is still a question of justifiable debate. As they are found in the Book of Revelation where all the preceding apocalyptic measures of time (3½ years, 1 hour, 3½ days) have a symbolical meaning, it seems to be demanded to take the thousand years as such also: especially as they are not found in an expository, explanatory vision. While the entire time from Christ's ascension, or from the destruction of Jerusalem to His
second coming presents itself symbolically as half a year week, or 3½ years (Rev. xi. 1, 2; xii. 5, 6), the duration of the visible existence of His kingdom on earth would then be symbolized by twenty jubilee-periods, 20 times 50. Thus the seed time and the time of oppression during the last half of Daniel's seventieth week would be very short after all, when compared with the time of harvest and of rest during the millennium. Besides, it is more in harmony with Christ's ways and methods, that by the short struggles of that trial period results of ages should be obtained than vice versa.

In this connection naturally two questions present themselves to us, "Where are the transfigured and glorified saints during the thousand years?" And, "What will their relation be to the nations on earth?" With reference to the first question we are informed that from the moment of their union with Christ in the air they will "ever be with the Lord" (I. Thessalonians iv. 17). But where is that locally? That Christ should remain with His glorified elect "somewhere in the air," as has been asserted, is an idea that has something undignified and incongruous in itself. There is an eminently befitting sense in His meeting His bridal congregation in a place where all the world of unbelief can and must see Him
and them united in glory; but it is inconceivable why He should remain with them in the atmosphere.

The idea that the Son of man after His uniting with the elect will come to earth with them, seems to be plausible. But if that is to mean that they should constantly dwell and live on this earth, just as the rest of the people do, then an unsurmountable obstacle presents itself. It is admitted all around that even during the Millennium the favorable conditions of man and nature will be those of an unglorified, imperfect and even sinful state. But an unglorified earth is certainly not an appropriate dwelling place for celestial, glorified people. If, however, that idea means that the glorified saints can and will have occasional intercourse with the believers on earth, then we would find in Christ's example during the forty days after His glorification not only the proof of the possibility of such an intercommunion, but even a foreshadowing of the same. Just as Christ came from the seat of His glory with the Father and went back again, but between His coming and leaving exercised an instructive, upbuilding and comforting influence over His disciples, so the glorified saints will appear and disappear during the millennial time among the children of God on earth in order
to teach, comfort, guide and encourage them in their Christian life and work. Thus, they with Christ exercise a spiritual, governing and ruling influence over those multitudes which during the millennial time are to be gathered into the visible kingdom of God. And who may then write the history of the Church of God during the blessed reign of Christ and His saints over and amidst the inhabitants of the millennial earth! No wonder that the prophets of both Testaments in glowing terms refer to the glorious blessings that will be bestowed upon man as well as upon nature during the time when Satan cannot tempt any more, but when Christ and His glorified saints will infuse powers of eternal life into the hearts, minds and bodies of the millennial Church. The following may be mentioned among the many:

(1) At the time of the Parousia the Gospel will have been carried to all the nations (Matt. xxiv. 14); but they are not by far all Christian-ized then. So when at the Revelation of the Lord merely the antichristian realm is destroy-ed the remaining millions of unconverted peo-ple will continue to propagate and to develop as before. But as they have been witnessing the disastrous effects of the Day of the Lord upon the realm of darkness, and are now made the objects of the saving and moulding energy of
the Church triumphant, we can easily understand why those multitudes should exhort themselves, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways; and we will walk in His paths” (Mic. iv. 2). When the tower and power of the kingdom of Satan crumbles into the dust, the mountain of the Lord’s house, the kingdom of Jehovah and His Christ, rises higher and higher in the estimation and adoration of all the inhabitants of the earth, and they flock to it. The Gospel ministry of those days will be a delight and laden with glorious results.

(2) There will be no war nor bloodshed, no famine nor pestilence; for those “four sore judgments” (Ezek. xiv. 21; Rev. vi. 1-8) have served their divinely appointed purpose in the great war of the Son of man with the world-power in its successive development. The King of kings, the Lord of lords “makes war to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear asunder; He burneth the chariots in the fire” (Ps. xlvi. 9). “All the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire” (Isa. ix. 5). “They [the nations] shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into
pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his figtree, and none shall make afraid; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it” (Mic. iv. 3, 4). As a natural result the rulers of the earth will enjoy absolute safety, so that the constantly increasing personal bodyguards and the international secret service will be dispensed with.

We are hardly able to realize such mighty changes in the political relations of the millennial nations to each other, when at present the warlike pursuits and preparations of the different kingdoms of this world have assumed such enormous magnitudes and appalling proportions.

(3) Scriptures assert a close connection between the first sin and the curse resting upon creation (Gen. iii. 14, 17, 18; Rom. viii. 19-22). In consequence of this the relation of the animal world to itself as well as to man has become distorted. The brute creation is in constant war with itself, devouring and destroying itself. And as for man, he has lost that dominion over the animal world which before the fall formed one of his great prerogatives (Gen. i. 26, ii. 20; Ps. viii. 6). It is therefore not at all surprising that the influence of
the exalted and intense spiritual life of the millennial masses will manifest itself also with reference to that double relation of the animal creation, just mentioned. With reference to a change in the wildness and blood-thirstiness of the irrational creatures we have this prophetic utterance of Isaiah, "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den" (chapter xi. 6-8). And the fact that the suckling child shall play on the hole of a poisonous reptile, the prophet expressly attributes to the other fact that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (verses 8, 9). When even now the habitual regard of the "righteous" to the life and well-being of His beasts (Prov. xii. 10) exercises a taming, sedative influence, and calls forth very often a grateful appreciation on the part of the animals, how much more then will that influence become universal when a general right-
eous, humane treatment of the irrational creation will be the rule!

(4) In like manner the present unfruitfulness, barrenness and waste of the earth is a direct consequence of sin (Gen. iii. 11-18). On the other hand Jehovah even after the fall promised to His Covenant people that, if they would walk in His commandments, He would "bless the fruit of the ground, the corn and the wine and the oil, the increase of the kine and young of the flock, in the land which He sware unto their fathers to give them" (Deut. vii. 13). It is, therefore, very natural that in connection with the latter days "the wilderness and the solitary place shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God" (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2). When a great part of the cause of nature's failures, of the cosmic disturbances—the sin of man—will be removed, then it is but natural that the diseased, abnormal creation will be partly restored again to its original normal condition and ability. As a result of this wonderful change there will be by far less of "the sweat of the face" of man, and he "shall not labor in vain" (Gen. iii. 19; Isa. lv. 21-23).
(5) It admits of no doubt that also the heavenly light bearers, sun, moon and stars, on account of sin cannot fulfil their divinely appointed purpose, as stated in Genesis i. 14, 15. Even in this sphere of creatural service extremes meet and failures occur. But according to prophecy ( Isa. xxx. 26) these celestial luminaries will increase a sevenfold in brilliancy and illuminating capacity when Israel’s redemption has come. That points us to millennial days.

(6) Taking the preceding wonderful physical effects of Christ’s Parousia upon creation in general altogether, it must be expected that the millennial blessings should have some elevating, restoring influence upon the earthly or physical side of man’s life. The enervating, debilitating effect of sin showed itself very soon on the primitive longevity of the human race. At the time of Moses the average duration of man’s life was not more than seventy years (Ps. xc. 10), a standard that is not reached in our days. At the same time the Scriptures put the fear of God and the prolonging of life’s days in the relation of cause and effect (Deut. xxx. 16, 20, xxxii. 46-47; Ps. lxi. 6). When, therefore, during the thousand years of blessing from heaven and from the rejuvenating earth the spiritual life of the millennial people is approaching divine perfec-
tion, we can well understand why prophecy maintains: "There shall be no more hence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. lxv. 20). Streams of powers of spiritual life cannot but renew and vivify the sources of the natural, physical life of mankind.
VII. THE LAST STRUGGLE

Revelation xx. 7, 8: "And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

Although the thousand years are times of extraordinary refreshings, yet sin is not altogether routed out. Consequently death will reign also on the millennial earth (Isa. lxxv. 20-22). This incomplete spiritual condition can, however, not exist forever; because the plan of salvation is working toward a full restoration of all things which are to be made the object of the effective Redemption of Christ. But how shall this divine purpose be accomplished? It cannot be brought about by a natural development, although extraordinary powers of eternal life are at work among unconverted people during the millennium. It must be effected by another crisis of a purifying nature. This fact is revealed to John, not through a vision, but through the ordinary channel of divine communication.
First of all he has to prophesy the release of Satan (chapter xx. 7). As his imprison-
ment was effected through a direct agency of God (verse 1), this release must also be or-
dered by the express will of God. Its purpose is clearly stated in the words, "And [he] shall
come forth to deceive the nations." This is not surprising as far as Satan comes into con-
sideration, because since his fall in the angelic world it has been his prerogative and unceasing
work to tempt man in order to deceive him (I. John iii. 8; Gen. iii.; Matt. iv. 1; John viii.
44; Rev. xii. 9). But when we try to find a reason why God should cause such a tempta-
tion after a period of unparalleled heavenly blessings and results, we are restricted to what
John is further revealing to us. We learn through him that after the divinely fixed mys-
tic thousand years there will be found on the four corners of the earth, all around the out-
skirts of the clearly defined and measured off
land, occupied by the saints of God, vast mul-
titudes of people who evidently have nothing in common with the millennial Church of God.
To all appearances they have set themselves against the saving powers of that time and con-
sequently retreated from that sacred and cen-
tral ground allotted for the work, life and ap-
ppearing of the earthly and heavenly saints
(verse 8). Keeping this fact in mind we can easily understand why they should become the fit and desirable objects of the deceitful temptation of the liberated and arch-deceiver. Inside the well-guarded and bounded off "camp of the saints" Satan could not hope to find any entrance; but among these heterogeneous masses he found a ready field for his fiendish work. Besides we may also draw the conclusion that this very obstinacy and hitherto restrained hostility of those unconverted masses towards the wonderful millennial spiritual powers necessitated a final crisis. That, however, had to be brought about by means of an agency which for a definite period had been restrained from activity. Satan had to be let loose in order to head and bring into open action that opposition to Christ and His saints which lacked push and direction.

These unconverted hordes are designated Gog and Magog. The latter name appears in the tables of primitive nations along side of Gomer among the sons of Japhet. Gog is rendered "mountain," while Magog is designated "land of Gog." According to Ezekiel xxxviii. 2 the prince or the people are called Gog, but his land Magog. The apocalyptic prophecy of Ezekiel (chapters 38 and 39) reveals, however, the deep mystery that the people of God
after their re-establishment and restitution still would have to face a severe attack of a brutal hostility of northern, remote barbarians. These enemies the prophet comprehends under the symbolical names of Gog and Magog. Their destruction is to be most wonderful and radical (Ezek. xxxviii, 18-21, xxxix, 1-6).

Now, when John, by the Spirit of God, is directed to Gog and Magog as the last enemies of Christ and the millennial people, he receives the indication that then the aforesaid prophecy of Ezekiel would find its fulfilment. Those refractory masses at the close of the thousand years will not consolidate during Daniel’s four world-monarchies, consequently they will not step into the political arena or take part in the antichristian development of the world-powers before the Parousia of the Son of man. Up to that time they will belong to those indistinct “many”waters or peoples, of which we read in Revelation xvii. 15. But when the Appearing of Christ will make an end to the last well-defined realm of darkness, and the kingdom without end (Dan. ii. 44) has passed through its thousand years of glory, then those roving multitudes will be organized and headed by Satan set free. Under his leadership they rise en masse against the camp of the saints and the beloved city (Dan. xi. 41),
surrounding it on all sides. John avoids, seemingly on purpose, in this connection, the name Jerusalem, although the designation "beloved city," and the "going up" of the hostile army would point to it (compare Luke xviii. 31). To the seer about that time the true Jerusalem is not any more the earthly city of David, but that Jerusalem which soon is to come down from heaven (Rev. xxi.).

This criminal, demonic insurrection against the Lord and the highest manifestation of His glory on earth is met by a quick and radical judgment—a judgment of fire, as Ezekiel had predicted it (Ezek. xxxix. 6). This fire-catastrophe is but the foreboding of the approaching final judgment, when this earth is to pass through the purifying, consuming ordeal by fire (II. Peter iii. 10, 12).

At the Parousia of Christ only the antichristian kingdom will be destroyed; at the judgment after the thousand years all the enemies of the Lord will lose their earthly life and existence, because they in their totality will rise against Him. At the beginning of the millennium Satan is imprisoned, at the end of that period he has to share with Antichrist and the false prophet, doomed at the Parousia (Rev. xix. 20), "the lake of fire and brimstone" in order to be tormented from "the ages
unto the ages” (Rev. xx. 10). This condemnation will be as endless as on the other hand the glory and dominion of God and His Christ will be (Rev. v. 13). That, of course, ends forever the work of the deceiving and tempting devil on earth; his eternal woe begins then. But his kingdom, the kingdom of the damned, has not yet passed through the last stage of development: Satan’s followers of all ages will have been gathered together in the realm of the dead (Hades), but they have to receive their final sentence yet, after their leader has entered upon his irrevocable penalty.
VIII. THE RESURRECTION FOR JUDGMENT

Revelation xx. 11-15: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

The judgment upon Gog and Magog and the devil leave only "the camp of the saints and the beloved city" on earth—as the rest are all consumed by fire (Rev. xx. 8, 9). In a new vision John receives understanding as to the final disposition of those that have no part in
the first resurrection nor in the millennial salvation. They are summoned before a white throne on which the Son of man, the Judge of the universe (John v. 22, 27; Acts xvii. 31), has taken His seat for final adjustment.

Those coming into this judgment are termed in general “the dead, the great and the small,” or, all that are dead yet. That, of course, excludes all those who at the Parousia of Christ had part in the first resurrection, or who were changed in the twinkling of an eye. They are not only not “dead,” having passed from death unto life, but they are even to take part in the judgment of the wicked (John v. 24-27). There is, however, a difference of opinion with reference to those saints of God who die during the millennial period. The question is whether they, just as all believers before the Parousia, in their death will pass into Paradise first to be raised afterwards, or whether they at the end of their mature age will be changed like the living saints at the Return of the Lord? As the Scriptures are entirely silent as to the mode of departure of the millennial Christians, and nothing is said of a subsequent resurrection, it would seem to be demanded almost to believe that they will be translated and thus joined at once to the glorified company of the saints of the Parousia.
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One thing, however, is sure; they will not be found in the judgment of the white throne, because no believer shall ever enter it.

But who are included in “the dead”? According to Revelation xx. 13 there are three different abodes of “the dead” from which they are led to the judgment bar, “The sea, death and Hades.” After they have been judged according to their works “death and Hades” are surrendered to the everlasting torments of “the second death,” or the lake of fire. So the dead of these two states or abodes are all sentenced to eternal condemnation. This is not stated of “the dead of the sea.” There must be, therefore, a difference between these two classes. Now, according to Scriptures only those pass into the lake of fire who die in positive unbelief with reference to the salvation in Christ Jesus. Death and Hades must then include all those who during their lifetime were brought into contact with the Gospel, but who hardened their hearts against the saving influence of the Spirit of God. That is to say, all the unbelieving Jews and Christians of all ages will receive their final, unalterable sentence of damnation at the time of the last judgment. Among these we can surely say will be found the antichristian masses and the multitudes of Gog and Magog.
If this view be correct, then "the dead of the sea" must include all those people who did not find any opportunity to hear the glad tidings of the plan of salvation during their earthly life. This idea finds confirmation in the fact that in Revelation xvii. 15 the incongruous peoples and multitudes and nations before the Parousia are called "many waters." It is true the expression "sea" for nations is avoided during the millennium, because these masses will not have any more the significance and importance of distinct nations and political powers, as before the coming of the Lord. But here, where reference is had to the totality of the dead who out of the Gentile nations ever passed into the realm of death, their usual symbolic designation, "sea," recurs again.

But how can it be possible that Gentiles who died without the Gospel should come into judgment with a possibility to escape its condemning sentence? The answer might be found in Romans ii. 7, when connected with Acts x. 35. In the first passage the Apostle asserts that God will render "eternal life to them that by patience [persevering] in well-doing, seek for glory and honor and incorruption." That, of course, cannot mean that the Gentiles shall receive eternal life on any other foundation than that which is laid down in
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Acts iv. 12, and elsewhere. But it can mean what Peter expresses in the second passage, that such seekers after eternal life are acceptable to God to be led to and into it. And here it is where Revelation xxii. 2 may guide us how such people out of the Gentile world who improved the light as far as they possessed it, after their resurrection at the last judgment-time may be led to a saving knowledge of Christ. In this last passage we have the remarkable statement that “the leaves of the tree of life, standing on both sides of the river of life, are for the healing of the nations.” So we find in the city of the New Jerusalem “nations” (Gentiles) who are not “dead,” but “sick”; i.e., in a condition in which they can be healed by the tree of life.

Now, if our interpretation of “the dead of the sea” be correct, then at the final judgment there will be found such Gentiles who as to their bodies are dead, being found in the realm of death; but who as to their moral condition are not spiritually dead, in the sense of the dead of Death and Hades: they are curably sick, and after their resurrection they are brought into contact with the healing power of the tree of life, with Christ and eternal life.
IX. THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

II. Peter iii. 13: "According to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Revelations xx. 1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more."

Already at the Parousia of Christ, as we have seen, unusual sidereal and telluric changes took place, without, however, endangering the very existence of the present heaven and earth (Revelation vi. 12 etc.; Matt. xxiv.). But at the white throne judgment, we are informed that earth and the heavens shall flee away before Him who sits on the throne. This evidently means more than cosmic changes—it means a doing-away with the present universe. Nothing, however, is said there and then about the manner of destruction of the old. This is shown to John in the vision of the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. xxi. 1-8).

The prophet Isaiah had predicted already a new heaven and a new earth in connection with the Messianic time (chapter lxv. 17; lxvi.
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22). The Apostle Peter tells us that this new creation shall be brought about by a burning up of the old: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements [heavenly bodies] shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up" (II. Peter iii. 10). Thus a new world shall be born out of the flames of the old. The first creation was formed out of the liquid, watery chaos (Gen. i. 2). From the solid, dry ground was separated the sea, which on account of its unstable, unruly nature, became the symbol of the constantly varying and tumultuous nations of the earth. The second creation will be born out of a world-conflagration. It will, therefore, assume a steady, firm, crystalline character, and there will be no room in it for a restless, never ceasing sea. Hence the statement: "And the sea was no more." And as the inhabitants of such a stable, new earth and heaven will be in conformity with the firmly established character of the new creation, we can safely say that it will have no room any more for an unorganized, restless sea of world-nations. The development of the glorified saints of God on the new earth will be uniform, constant and in accordance with the eternally established norms of the being and life of
God. When in Revelation xxii. 1 a river of water of life is mentioned, doubtless the same water is meant which Christ alludes to in John iv. 10, 14, and which in chapter vii. 38, 39 He interprets to signify the Holy Spirit. The New Jerusalem knows of no combination of hydrogen and oxygen, but only of spiritual powers of eternal life to satisfy the soul.

According to Revelation xxi. 2 not only the New Jerusalem comes down out of the New Heaven, but God also transfers His tabernacle or dwelling place from heaven to earth. Heaven is now on earth, and God dwells in the midst of His people. Since the creation of the universe heaven and earth have formed a polarity, or opposite, and contrasted conditions, spiritually and physically. Especially since the fall of man the earth has been very far from being heavenly. Even during the millennial period, as we have seen, the earth will only partially present heavenly conditions (Rev. xx. 1-10), and the glorified Lord and His glorified people will not find an adequate dwelling place on the earth during that time. But now, while at the moment of the new creation this contrast between heaven and earth is still maintained, in the next moment it disappears entirely: Heaven and earth become one, and God will forever dwell and manifest His
heavenly glory in the city of the New Jerusalem on the new earth. A voice out of the descended throne announces the completion of the glorious union of the hitherto two opposites (Lev. xxvi. 11, 12; Ezek. xxxvii. 27). The consequence is the cessation of all evil, death, pain, etc. (Gen. iii. 17; Isa. lxv. 19). Life in the heavenly city is life in eternal bliss, restful sabbatic adoration of God and of the redemptive miracles of His grace and power. The Eternal One will then have verified His prediction, "Behold I make all things new" (Isa. xliii. 19; II. Cor. v. 17).
X. THE NEW JERUSALEM

It is one of the most difficult points of eschatology to form a clear idea, or to give a satisfactory explanation, of the New Jerusalem of Revelation xxii. and xxii. The data given there are so entirely transcending all human realities and possibilities that nothing but simple faith is able to find an anchorage-ground. Human calculation and reasoning is utterly failing here. Still, there are a few points given in connection with this heavenly picture about which the Lord has not left us altogether in the dark as to their meaning.

(1) As regards the name, that has, of course, no reference to the "Hierosoloma" of history. Neither does the term designate the "heavenly Jerusalem," or the "Jerusalem above" (Heb. xii. 22; Gal. iv. 26) comprising all those saints who at the Parousia of Christ were raptured and are ruling with Him during the thousand years (I. Thess. iv. 16, 17). The New Jerusalem is rather the heavenly Jerusalem transplanted from heaven upon the new earth, with which it is sharing all the new conditions and possibilities.

(2) At the beginning of the creation of the
new heaven and the new earth these two localities appear as yet distinct from each other (Rev. xxi. 1). But from the moment of the descent of the New Jerusalem God's throne and tabernacle or dwelling place also descends on the earth (Rev. xxi. 2, 3). Consequently He dwells with men on the new earth, is with them henceforth and forever, and they are His people. Heaven and earth are now united permanently (II. Cor. vi. 16; Lev. xxvi. 11; Ezek. xliii. 7; John i. 14).

(3) Although John is shown a city, yet he beholds in it at the same time "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb, adorned for her Husband" (Rev. xxi. 3, 9). Thus the city and the glorified Church of God are identical.

(4) In consequence of this final eschatological union of heaven and earth, of God and man, New Jerusalem possesses in her midst the glory of the Lord in all its fulness, power and brightness. The glorified Church being permeated through and through with the Holy Spirit, the Lord can now impart to her without obstruction the fulness of His grace, and with that the glory of His matchless being. What Moses received but partially (Ex. xxxiv. 29, 30), is accorded to the inhabitants of New Jerusalem without measure.

(5) This Shechinah of the Lord in the midst
of His people becomes naturally the "luminary," or light of the city, that which is lighting it up (Rev. xxi. 11, 23). Wherever the Lord is present there is glorious light beaming forth from that presence. In New Jerusalem He can manifest His presence unobstructedly, the brightness of His glory is therefore diffused through its length and breadth (Isa. lx. 1, 19, 20; John xii. 41). Hence the city has no need any more of any natural or created light and lightbearers (Rev. xxi. 23); because that is now superseded by the Source of all light, the glory of Jehovah, manifesting itself in and through the Lamb. At the same time the citizens of New Jerusalem become on their part fully what they were insufficiently on earth—the lightbearers of God's own light and life (Phil. ii. 15).

(6) The city presents four sides or a square; and each side has three gates or portals. Multiplying the four sides by the three gates of each side we count twelve gates altogether, the product of four times three. Now, four is the number of creation as such, or of nature in general; while three is the number of the Trinity. New Jerusalem, therefore, presents itself to us as a new creation multiplied or brought about by the creative, redemptive energy of the Triune God. The original creative
purposes of the three Persons of the Godhead (Gen. i. 1-3; John i. 1-3; Col. i. 16, 17) we behold now as being realized in that wonderful creation of the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. xxi. 12-14). Nature is entirely transformed into the perfect image of God (II. Cor. iii. 18; Rev. xxi. 12-14).

Each of the gates bears the name of one of the tribes of Israel. The reason for this lies in the fact that in the Book of Revelation from chapter seven on, the eschatological Church appears as converted Israel, into which the Gentile Christians are received as full citizens. This Israelitic-Christian Church of New Jerusalem is reared on twelve foundations, bearing the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, Jesus Christ being the chief Cornerstone (Eph. ii. 20; Matt. xvi. 18; Heb. xi. 10). This fact ought to have guarded against all particularistic Jewish and Irvingian notions. New Jerusalem presents a cosmopolitan Christian community, gathered out of all nations of the earth, though designated by Old Testament terms (Rev. xxi. 14).

(7) New Jerusalem has no need of a temple; because God and the Lamb have now taken the place of earthly sanctuaries. The Lord's intercourse with the glorified saints is not any more by means of sacred persons, seasons
and places, but is direct, immediate and personal. The inhabitants of the new city do not go into a temple, they go directly to God, and there is not the least hindrance to such a personal communion. And as all the people in New Jerusalem have become the complete temples of the Holy Spirit, they, on their part, present a living temple of God and the Lamb (I. Cor. vi. 16; vi. 19; Eph. ii. 21). The Lord is ever present for His people, but also in and through them (Rev. xxii. 22, 23; John xvii. 21-23).

(8) The life of the saints of the heavenly city cannot fail to manifest itself in divine fulness, energy and duration. For we find that it is nourished, enriched and maintained by the never-ceasing forces and energies of the life and being of the Triune God Himself. This fact is symbolized by the crystal river flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, and by the tree of life on both sides of the river, bearing fruit continually (Rev. xxii. 1-2). What Christ had promised His disciples (John iv. 10, etc.; vii. 38, etc.), and what all the children of God experience as to their spiritual nourishment, we find fulfilled in an unlimited degree in the state of life of the saints in glory. In the Paradise of creation the river mentioned and the many fruit-bearing trees were
to form the channels through which the image of God in created man was to receive its rejuvenating powers. That great creative thought and purpose of God is realized fully in the unlimited resources of the spiritual sustenance of the inhabitants of New Jerusalem (Gen. ii. 9, 16). Of course, it is the Triune God Himself who with His own glorious fulness of life and power satisfies His saints (John vi. 35-51; Ps. xvii. 15).

No doubt, the greatness of the stream and the superabundant fruitfulness of the tree of life in the city indicates the fact that not only the entire Israel of God in it is supplied plentifully, but that the glorified saints shall be nourished richer, more glorious, with ever deeper, more intensive pleasures of heavenly bliss as the ages of eternity pass on.

In view of this unspeakable outlook there is but one attitude for the Church of God to occupy, that of fulfilling the Master’s command, “Go ye,” and then to pray unceasingly, “Come, Lord Jesus.”