

Coming Events

by G.H. Lang

The sermon explores the warrant for hope in the Bible's predictions of future events, the mystery of the kingdom, and the parousia of the lawless one, highlighting the significance of the Antichrist and the end times.

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, Matthew 24:21, Luke 24:26, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, 1 Peter 1:11, 1 John 5:19, Revelation 17:10-11, Revelation 21:3-4

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Hope in Prophecy"

Description

G.H. Lang delivers a profound sermon titled 'Coming Events,' emphasizing the certainty of biblical prophecy and the hope it provides for the future. He explains that while the past may fade from human memory, God sees all time as present, allowing Him to accurately predict future events through His prophets. Lang outlines the significance of the first prophecy in Genesis 3:15, which foretells the ultimate victory of Christ over Satan, and discusses the dual experiences of suffering and triumph that Christ would endure. He also highlights the ongoing spiritual battle between good and evil, culminating in the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom, urging believers to remain steadfast in their faith.

Transcript

An outline of a vast theme must needs omit much detail and cannot admit much discussion. This tends to a definiteness which may seem dogmatic, but this is not intentional. Copious references to Scripture are given in proof, but these must be read, and read in the Revised Version. Though abundant in number they are generally but a selection.

I THE WARRANT FOR HOPE.

1. To the finite mind the past fades into forgetfulness and the future lies hidden. To the mind of the Eternal the past is still present and the future has already come. A shrewd observer of human history can, within very narrow limits, forecast what may come: only God can foretell what will come, especially as to detail and the remote future. Therefore, men who did accurately foretell the future must have been taught of God, and the one and only Book which contains such predictions bears the seal of God. The Bible is ancient. Its first portions were written by Moses some 3,300 years ago, and include predictions known to have been given long before that, the earliest (Gen. 3:14-16) at least 2,600 years before, i.e., at least 6,000 years ago. Its latest books, the New Testament, have been extant for 1,850 to 1,900 years. The Book contains almost innumerable predictions of events that were to follow the various times when they were announced.

From the standpoint of today these events may be divided into

(1) such as were to have taken place already and

(2) such as lie in days still ahead. The former have had fulfilment, which is rational ground for expecting that the latter will be fulfilled. Were a traveller, seeking directions as to his way, to be informed of a dozen features - churches, inns, crossroads - which he would find, and were six of these features duly met, this would justify him in expecting to find the other six features.

2. It has been, pointed out that Bible prophecy is confirmed by having passed five severe tests.

First. Remoteness of Time. The fulfilment has been so distant from the prediction that the prophet could not influence the fulfilment.

Second. Minuteness of Detail, so that shrewd guesswork could not guarantee the accuracy of fulfilment.

Third. Novelty of Combination, so that nothing in previous history could enable, a. forecast of the events.

Fourth. Mystery of Contradiction, so that the prophecy could not be understood fully until its fulfilment and, therefore, its fulfilment could not be humanly contrived. Yet:

Fifth. Clearness of Forecast, so that the fulfilment shall be seen to correspond to the prediction.

See God's Living Oracles ((Pickering and Inglis, Ltd.), by Dr. A. T. Pierson, chapters iv and v where examples of such prophecies and their fulfilment are given)

3. The first prediction contained in principle all subsequent prophecies. It said that the Seed of the woman should bruise the Serpent's head, and that. the latter should bruise His heel (Gen. 3: 15). All history is the outworking and the fulfilling of this conflict. Prophecy, therefore, has to do principally with two persons, Christ and the Devil; all other persons are involved as being connected with these two. Two leading features were here foretold.

1. The final and complete victory of Christ over Satan, as a man conquers a serpent when he crushes its head with his heel.

2. That in the battle the Victorious heel would be hurt by the Serpent. Yet this could not be fatal or permanent, or Christ could not be victorious, but be defeated, by the Serpent as well as defeating it.

This implied two distinct, contrasted, yet connected experiences for Christ - suffering and triumph. The prophets "testified beforehand the sufferings that should come unto Christ, and the glories that should follow them". (1Pet.1:11) "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26). This double experience is seen very clearly in Ps. 22 and Isa. 53, as well as in many other places.

Two things are certain.

(1) That the predictions concerning the sufferings of Christ were fully accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth. On page 114 of the book before cited, it is said:

Minutiae of Detail - Over 300 predictions about the Messiah are found in the Old Testament. According to the law of compound probability, the chance of their coming true is represented by the fraction, whose

numerator is one, and the denominator is eighty-four, followed by nearly 100 ciphers! One might almost expect by accident to dip up any one particular drop out of the ocean, as to expect so many prophetic rays to converge by chance upon one man, in one place, at one time.

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the other that of which Satan is prince (John 12:31; 14: 30; 16: 11) and god (2 Cor. 4:4). These kingdoms have their entres in the world of spirits, but they include this material earth and its inhabitants. The respective sovereigns, God and Satan, are not visible to mankind, and each has in view for the future a visible human representative who is to exercise authority over the earth in the interests of those invisible Rulers from whom each derives his authority. For this purpose, God has appointed Christ His Son, and Satan has appointed Antichrist, the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:1-12). Each of these has already appeared on earth for a time and each is to appear again (Rev. 17:10, 11). The future appearing and workings of these two rulers is the chief subject of prophecy.

2. Each of the supreme sovereigns, God and Satan, has long since set in motion on earth secret influences designed to prepare the way for the final open developments each has in view. These workings are termed "mysteries," not because they are particularly "mysterious" in themselves, but because they are at work in secret, discerned only by the enlightened. On the one side there is "the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4: 11), 'which was at work in the time of Christ; on the other side there is "the mystery of lawlessness" which was already at work when Paul wrote of it in 2 Thess. 2: 7. Each of these secret schemes has several elements, themselves called "mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt. 13:11) or "of God " (Luke 8: 10), or termed "the deep things of Satan" (Rev. 2: 24). History is the record of past outworkings of these schemes; prophecy reveals their future activities and effects.

III THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM.

1. ISRAEL. Before the time of Moses (cent. 15 B.C.) there had arisen various national kingdoms, each in its region and with its king. There was no such kingdom of God. He had no realm on earth, no political entity where His sovereignty was acknowledged: all was under the rule of Satan.

But through Moses God brought the Hebrew race out of slavery, constituted them a nation, separate from the other nations, and said unto them: "if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me from among all peoples: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. 19: 5,6).

But in even their palmiest days as a nation the obedience of Israel to the laws of their divine King was but imperfect and inconstant, and they were but a feeble display of the kingdom of God. At length their defection advanced to rebellion, they brought disgrace upon the name of their God (Isa. 52: 5. Rom. 2:24), and after some seven centuries of divine patience God at length disowned them as a people, giving them the names Lo-Ruhamah, which means, "that hath not obtained mercy," and "Lo-ammi, for ye are not My people. and I will not be your God" (Hos. 1:6, 9). Lev. 26; Deut. 29; Ezek. 5; etc.

Yet in the same breath it was at once added by the same prophet that a time should come when "in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not My people, it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God . . . Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi ; and to your sisters Ruhamah that hath obtained mercy " (Hos. 1: 10-2:1). The nation originally composed of twelve tribes, had, in Hosea's time, been long divided into two kingdoms, but the prophet announced that they should at last be gathered together and have one

head. Lev~ 26:44, 45. Deut. 30:1-6.

Feature I. Here is shown a primary composite event of the future-the restoration of the Jewish people as a nation and kingdom, under the rule of God and His laws. This is to be a restoration-

(1) Of the whole people, of all the tribes, of both sections of the divided kingdom. Ezek. 37:15-28. Isa. 11:12, 13. Jer. 50:4, 5. Rev. 7:1-8; etc.

(2) Messiah, son of David shall be their King. Ezek. 37: 22-25. Jer. 30:9. Hos. 3:5. Zech. 3:8; 6:12, 13; etc. This requires the return of Christ to the earth. Zech. 14:4; etc. Note-Some passages may mean that David the son of Jesse shall be raised up to be king over Israel under Messiah.

(3) This restoration shall be " in the place " where God disowned them (Hos. 1: 10). Unquestionably this is Palestine. See again Ezek. 37: 21, 22; " in the land, upon the mountains of Israel;" also 36:24, " I will bring you into your land." Every passage which bears on the point is to the same effect.

(4) The public worship of God shall be again centred in a temple at Jerusalem. Ps. 66:13, 15; 96:6-13. Isa. 19:21; 27:13; 66:23. Jer. 33:17. Ezek. 40-48. ~ian. 8:11-13. Zech. 6:12, 13; 14: 16-21. Mal. 3:2, 3. Mat. 24: 15. 2 Thess. 2:3, 4. Rev. 11: 12. That some are unable to reconcile this with the epistles ~o Hebrews and the Galatians, does not alter the consensus of Old Testament and New Testament upon the matter. The meaning of the passages is perfectly plain.

(5) The passages cited foretell the necessary repentance and spiritual regeneration of the small remnant of Israel (Isa. 1:8, 9. Zech. 13 : 8, 9) that will survive the judgments of God, and an outpouring of His Spirit upon them. Isa. 32:15; 44:3; 59:21. Ezek. 36:27; 87:14; 39:29. Thus will they be fitted at last (Isa. 61:5, 6) to be that " kingdom of priests proposed at the beginning of their national history but hitherto forfeited by them, and it will be seen that " the gifts and calling of God are without change of mind '~ on His part, and " all Israel apostles, and to continue unto the end of this age at the return of the Son of man (vs. 37-43).

(2) The Devil would soon insert his "children," the tares, into the realm where the good seed was sown, creating a mixed condition of good and evil (The period of the Church Fathers). This also will continue to the end of age. (VS. 24-30, 36-43.)

(3) This society, the church, was intended by the Lord to be outwardly small and lowly, as a normal plant of mustard, but it would take on an unnatural growth and become a vast institution, a tree in which evil spirits would live and work. (The period of Constantine and the constituting "Christianity" the religion of the State). (vs. 31, 32.)

(4) The corrupting influence of "leaven" (false doctrine, Matt. 16:8-12), spread universally by the false corporate confederated Church (the "woman "), thus appointed by the State as religious teacher of the people (ver. 33).

(5) Truth so overlaid with error, the key of knowledge so taken away, that men. only accidentally happened on truth as on a treasure hidden in a field. To acquire this the finder had commonly to forego all things, often at risk or penalty of life. Luther casually finding a Bible in a monastery was an instance. (The Dark Ages.) (ver. 44.)

(6) By the preaching and writing of the Reformers it became known that Divine truth was available; but worldliness settled over the Reformed churches so that men had often to go searching for this pearl they

wanted. And again the earnest had often to pay a high price for possession. The Reformers, alas, per-secuted as bitterly, if not for so long, as the Catholic Church had done (vs. 45, 46).

(7) Au through the age the witness of faithful men would bring to profession of faith many hearers. But as a net gathers bad fish as well as good, so would some make an unreal, and even insincere, profession. This also will continue unto the "consummation of the age." (vs. 47, 50).

Feature II. Thus is seen a second general and dominant feature to be expected, i-ame-ly, the increase of evil in the world (" the field "), and in the sphere of Christian profes-sion, until lihe consummation of this age, not merely till some point prior to this consummation. See further Matt. 24:9-14. Mark 13:36. Luke 18:8. 2 Thess. 2:1-13. 1 Tim. 4:1-3. 2 Tim. 4:3, 4; etc.

This includes:

(1) Even as only a small remnant of Israel at the close of this age will await their Messiah and be brought through the End days, so with the church of God. "The love of the many

(e) Of t-heir descendants only a very few were ready to welcome their Messiah when He came, such as Mary, Simeon, Anna.

(f) At the end of tihe age, as shown above, only a very small remnant of Israel shall be faithful and preserved.

It has been thus throughout the Christian age also.

(a) Soon after its comencement the Lord said: " Thou hast a few names in Sardis that have not defiled their gar-ments " (Rev. 3:4). At Laodicea the whole company were lukewarm, and it was a question for each separately whether he individually would admit the Lord and sup with Him (Rev. 3:20).

(B) By the end of the fourth century but few withstood the pressure of the world and rejected its State Church.

(c) During the thousand years of the Dark Ages only com-paratively few walked with Christ.

(d) of the many that received the truth through the Reformers only a minority continued unworldly and heavenly.

(e) The same feature has developed after every subsequent movement of the Spirit of God. It is therefore in melancholy harmony that this shall continue to characterize the people of God unto and in the end of this age.

3. THE WORLD. Except for such as have been born of God upon faith in Christ the human race entire is Satan's sphere (1 John 5:19), with his spirit working in them (Eph. 2:2) and blinding their minds as to God and eternity (2 Cor. 4:3, 4). He is its prince politically (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11. Matt. 4: 8, 9. Luke 4:5-7), and its religious head, its god (2 Cor. 4: 4), ever seeking worship, as from Christ. His mind is that of the rebel, acting deliberately in defiance of his Sovereign.

This spirit of lawlessness has worked in mankind from Adam's fall onwards. It accounts for the age-long and uni-versal disregard of God and His laws. From time to time it has produced political leaders fully hostile to God, such as, e.g., Pharoah: "I know not Jehovah, and moreover I will not let Israel go," as He

orders me to do, (Ex. 5:2). This spirit will go on working until at last it will produce a concerted international revolt against God and His Son (Ps.2: 1-3), a determined effort to break loose wholly from Their bands and cords. A local manifestation of this was seen in Palestine when Jewish leaders and Gentile rulers combined to destroy Jesus (Acts 4 : 26-28). A full display will be seen in the last years of this age and a final display at the end of the Millennial age (Rev. 13:3, 8; 16:12-16; 19:17-21; 20:7-10).

v Now any great movement must have a great Leader, and the invisible Prince of the world will produce one suited to serve His ends. This will bring on

Feature III, the Parousia of the Lawless One (2 Thess. 2: 1-12). Not until after his parousia can the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ take place (ver. 1). (" Parousia " means both the arrival and the stay of a coming person.) This man will so dominate the End days that very many particulars are given of him and his career.

A. Events to precede his appearing.

(1) A general apostasy from any recognition of the true God; seen in the world at large ('Ps. 2:1-3) and also among those who professed the Christian faith (2 Thess. 2:3. Rev. 16: 14, 16. Matt. 24: 10-13. 1 Tim. 4:1-3. 2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

(2) This will be intensified by Satan and his angels being expelled from his as yet tolerated presence and influence in the world above and their being restricted to the earth as their sphere of operations (Rev. 12:1-12). It will be a repetition upon a vaster scale of that ancient irruption of evil angels (" Sons of God ") which so aggravated, wickedness among men that it brought the Flood (Gen. 6:1-8. 1 Pet. 3:19,20. Jude 6). This coming irruption will again ripen wickedness and compel judgment. The days of Noah and of Lot will be repeated (Luke 17 : 26-37. Matt. 24 : 86-42).

2 Thess. 2:9-12).

(3) The whole world, political and religious, will have been carefully prepared for co-ordination of government and domination by one Ruler. Satan's authority includes all peoples and nations (Luke 4: 5-7. 1 John 5: 19), and this universal dominion, which Christ refused, he will bestow upon the Antichrist (Rev. 13: 1-10). The centralizing movements of modern times are obviously tending in this direction.

B. The Ruler himself.

(1) He is to be a monarch who has already reigned on earth. Rev. 17:8-11; 13:3. He is at present restrained in Hades, the realm of the dead, the abyss (presumably by the Angel-ruler of that region, 2 Thess. 2:6, 7. Rev. 9:11), until " his own season " shall have arrived, the period permitted by God for his future activity on earth. Then he will be released. It will be rather a resuscitation than a reincarnation or a resurrection. (2) In character he will 'be lawlessness personified, the Lawless One, owning no superior other than the Devil, his god (Dan. 11:38); otherwise suppressing all religions (especially that of the God of gods) and enforcing the worship of himself alone (Dan. 11:36, 37. 2 Thess. 2:4. Rev. 13:11-17). Emperor worship and the worship of Satan combined will be alone legal. Modern philosophical blending of all religions into one is tending to this goal. Parliaments of Religion are a preparatory measure.

By consequence, Antichrist will abolish all political and legal institutions and seek to establish a new system of human life (Dan. 7:25). Of this the Bolsheviks have given a preliminary illustration in the 1917 revolution and since.

C. His Rise to Power.

(1) A terrific tempest of strife will convulse the Mediter-ranean area and four political powers will emerge in succes-sion (Dan. 7). (It is possible that Italy has been of late the first of these: the sudden and simultaneous crippling of its fleet and navy answering to the plucking of the two wings of the first beast; and the present efforts of the Western powers to re-establish it answering to its being set up again on its two feet, with a human heart instead of a wild beast nature. But this is not affirmed positively. If it is not so, it can at least illustrate what the vision means.)

(2) There will come a series of wars between Assyria, the king of the north, and Egypt, the king of the south, detailed in Dan. 11:5-35.

(3) The fourth wild beast will apparently arise in the eastern end of the Mediterranean and will be a combination of ten kingdoms.

(4) Within the area of these ten kingdoms an insignificant person will assert himself and will overthrow three of the ten (Dan. 7 :8). These his first conquests will be towards the south (Syria or Egypt), the east (Mesopotamia and Persia), and Palestine (the glorious land, Ezek. 20: 6, 15. Dan. 8:9). This implies that his own original seat of power will be north of Palestine and west of Mesoptamia, therefore, probably, Armenia. He will forge ahead until he has been accepted as supreme ruler of the ten (Rev. 17:12, 13), i.e., of the whole fourth beast. This will be the Lawless One, the Antichrist (1 John 3:18, 22). His career will fulfil Seals 1 to 4 of Revelation 6. This ruler will so infect his kingdom with his own spirit that it will eagerly fulfil his plans: they will be so one that both he and it are " the beast " (Dan. 7:11. Rev. 13; 17:3).

(5) By virtue of the force of his character and the weight of his confederacy he will trample upon the other three Mediterranean " beasts " and will proceed to gain the mastery over the whole earth. His rule will for a short time be univer-sal, covering the full human sphere of the Prince of the world, the Devil. It will be by the craft and energy of Satan that he will succeed (Dan. 8:23, 24; 11:38. Rev. 13:2-4).

(6) The Beast will rebuild the city Babylon the Great and make it his capital, the royal centre of his universal empire (Isa. chs. 13, 14, 47, 48. Jer. chs. 50, 51. Rev. 16:19; ch. 18-19:3).

(7) The Jewish State, then in Palestine, will enter into a league and covenant with the Beast, the king of Assyria. It will be for seven years (Dan. 9:27. Isa. 28:14, 18). Some of israel will have attempted earlier to influence the previous wars in favour of their political position, but the effort will have been abortive (Dan. 11:14). This league, however, will seem at first to be a security to their State and religion, while to the Beast it will open Jewish 'wealth and ability and make them a buffer on his south-western frontier.

and one system of life will seem to secure universal peace. The hopes and efforts of our time will appear to have been realized and men will say with relief "Peace and Safety" (1 Thess. 5:3).

Note.

(1) The foregoing events imply that by the period in view the Middle East will be occupied by independent powers, able to make wars and treaties on their own account. Control by Western powers such as France and England has lately ended, a very significant fact. Nor is to be expected that other nations, remote from the area, such as the United States, Russia, or far eastern powers, will gain permanent over-lord-ship, for tihis would frustrate the universal sovereignty of the Beast ruling from Babylon.

(2) The Middle East is the geographical standpoint from which prophecy views and measures affairs. Jerusalem is God's centre (2 Chron. 7:12-16. Dan. 9:16, 17. Zech. 14: 1-4, 16-21. Matt. 5:34): Babylon is Satan's centre. In prophecy, north, south, east, or west, near or far off, mean in relation to Jerusalem as centre.

(3) Neither Bible history nor prophecy takes any distinct account, if any account at all, of the Americas, north Europe, Russia, China (except possibly west China, Sinim, Isa. 49:12), or lands south of the equator. This is to be pondered as a feature of the End Times of this age. They may be included under such general phrases as "the whole earth," "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 13:3, 7); and, if they are then in existence, this will be so. But what if, for abounding wickedness and rejection of the gospel, they shall have been blotted out? Atomic bombs and angel-inflicted pestilences could accomplish this.

This at least may be safely inferred from the silence of Scripture, that at the time of the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy they will be of no more importance as to the affairs of the Middle East than they were in the times of Bible history. The ancient world centre is its coming world centre, and, ever since the days of Napoleon, modern movements have set powerfully in that direction, and with vastly increased momentum of late.

Feature IV. The Great Harlot (Rev. 17).

1. World Empire commenced in Babylon shortly after the Flood (Gen. 10:8-12). There also commenced world religion without the true and only God. that is, both the philosophy and practice of idolatry; the worship of demons represented by idols (Deut. 32:16, 17. 1 Cor. 10:20, 21). The history of that apostasy is given in Rom. 1:18-32. With the dispersion of the races from Babylon that religious system spread to all lands (Jer. 51:7. Rev. 17:5, "the Mother "). It was already in Italy before Rome was founded (about B.C. 750), and it became the established religion of that city and State. Julius Caesar (B.C. 64) received the office and title of Pontifex Maximus, the head of the Babylonian priesthood. Thus Rome became the centre of Babylonian religion, Babylon having already lost its priority some five centuries B.C. Under Constantine this system and apostate "Christianity" were merged, the latter becoming Babylonian in form and practice; and shortly Gratian conferred the title of Pontifex Maximus upon Damasus, the bishop of Rome. Thus the nominally christian bishop became the head of the Babylonian religion.

2. Inasmuch as it was of the essence of that religion that the king was the chief priest, the Bishops of Rome claim superiority to rulers. This is to be re-asserted in the End Time. The "woman" will ride the "beast" (Rev. 17:3, 15, 18). By that time the System will have incorporated into itself the many sections of Christendom that originated in her but have separated from her. This is plainly in process.

Also, when world power centres again at Babylon the Woman will return there to her original place (Zech. 5 : 5-11), and will, perhaps, become again avowedly pagan.

3. Secular power being again hers, the Woman will persecute unto death all spiritual and dissenting Christians (Luke 21:12ff., "before all these things:" Rev. 17:6).

4. The Lawless One will tolerate her rule until he shall have reached supremacy. But then he and his subordinate kings will destroy this System of religion so that he may have undisputed rule and enforce his own religion (Rev. 17 :6, 17).

Feature V. The Tribulation the Great One. (Rev. 17:14. Matt. 24:21. Dan. 12:1. Joel 2:2).

1. Dissent from Emperor worship will be made a capital offence (Rev. 13: 15). The first world emperor, Nebuchad-nezzar, attempted to force on all his subjects a State religion, the worship of his god. The penalty of non-compliance was death (Dan. 3). In the second century B.C. the king of Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes, endeavoured to force his kingdom to worship only his god, Jupiter. At both periods godly Jews resisted and suffered. The salutary effect on pious Israelites was to purify them of idolatry and keep them pure. Under the Roman emperors a stage further was reached. Not merely the god of the emperor was to be worshipped but the Emperor himself, as the human embodiment of deity. At that period the Jewish religion was sanctioned officially, it was a legally recognized cult, but the followers of Christ suffered unto death.

By the Antichrist no toleration will be granted. It will be the time of Jacob's trouble " (Jer. 30:7) and also of Christians, " the saints " (Rev. 13:7; 14:~2). As with all preceding tribulation so then, the effect will be to advance holiness in the faithful; both in godly Jews (Dan. 11:35) and in Gentile believers (Rev. 7:14). This period is not that of the wrath of God: that wrath will consume His enemies, this tribulation will sanctify His people. The wrath of God will follow immediately upon this period (Rev. 16:1).

2. Enforcement of the legal religion will be in the hands of a Minister of Religion. In nature he will be a second wild beast; in manner as a lamb, suave and gentle, like many a persecutor before him; in speech a dragon, fearful when provoked; in practice a wizard, working signs to deceive, if possible, the chosen of God (Matt. 24: 24); in repressive measures against dissenters he will be cunning and ferocious (Rev. 13: 11-17)

Detection will be assured by a publicly worn mark signifying that one is a worshipper of the Lawless One. Without this being produced trading and procuring food will be illegal. Trade union tickets, identity cards, ration books, are familiarizing the public in many lands for the final measures of State intolerance and persecution.

In his magical deceits he will be aided by a wide irruption of demon forces working through false prophets (Matt. 24: 23-26. 2 Thess. 2:9, 10). V 3. There will be angelic warning against compliance with the Emperor's demands and the worship of his image (Rev. 14 :9-12). Very many will resist, even unto death (Matt. 24: 8, 9. Rev. 6:9-11; 14:12), and will thus secure special blessing and recompense in the kingdom of God (Rev. 14:13; 20:4).

4. This valiant testimony will have the effect of a universal preaching of the good news of the then imminent kingdom of God, and this will be a sure sign that the consummation of the age has come (Matt. 10:16-23; 24:14. Mark 13:9-13).

5. The duration of this Tribulation will be limited by God to three and a half years (Matt. 24:22. Rev. 11:2, 3; 13:5).

Feature VI. The Closing Stage of the Lawless One.

1. In the middle of the period he will violate the seven years' covenant with Israel. Dropping all pretence he will proceed to extreme measures to enforce the worship of himself (Dan. 9: 27). The godly of Israel will have built a temple and have re-established divine worship (Rev. 11: 1, 2. 2 Thess. 2: 3, 4). His statue will be placed there, making the sanctuary abominable and desolate (Dan. 9:27. Matt. 24:15). Resistance by

the Jews will bring the destruction of their sanctuary and city (Dan. 9:26).

This will not be the temple to be built by Messiah after His return (see Feature I (4) above), but one to be built by the Jews prior to that return.

2. While peace and prosperity will for a time assure wide contentment with his rule, there will come some dissatisfaction and revolt. Egypt will rebel and will be invaded by his forces led by himself, and, with adjacent north African territory, will be crushed (Dan. 11:40-43). While engaged in those parts he will receive disquieting news from the eastern and northern sides of his home base (Dan. 11:44). Perhaps this is the attack of the Medes upon his capital, Babylon, which will commence those judgments of God which will be completed in the final overthrow of his city (Isa. 13:17. Jer. 51:11).

3. Filled with fury (Dan. 11:44) he will destroy many and will foment and support a conspiracy of the descendants of Ishmael, Esau, and Lot to blot out Israel (Ps. 83). Probably it is because these Transjordanian peoples will be joined with him against Israel that their lands will not be ravaged by him (Dan. 11:41). The ancient hatred of those races against Israel will blaze forth in this last attempt to destroy them.

4. To complete the destruction of Israel and Jerusalem, and to be ready for the final impending invasion of his empire by the Word of God and the armies of heaven, the Beast, secretly aided by demonic agencies, will mobilize the whole of his forces and invade Palestine (Ezek. 38 and 39, "Gog." Rev. 13:13-16; 19:19-21). Jerusalem will be sacked, half the survivors will be dragged into captivity, and the remnant be left there (Zech. 14:1, 2. Luke 21:20-24), in fear of extermination (Joel 2:12-17).

5. At the very hour when Satan's plan to ruin the plans of God, by the exterminating of Israel and Christians, seems assured, the great Beast and his armies will be destroyed by the sudden outshining of the glory of Christ at His descent to the Mount of Olives, accompanied by all His angels (Joel 2: 18. Zech. 14:3,4, 12-15. Matt. 24:29-31. 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8. Rev. 2:11-21). Thus "he shall come to his end" and none shall help him" (Dan. 11:45), that end being that he and his false prophet shall be consigned to the lake of fire for ever (Rev. 19:20). And here is the end of all international schemes and combinations (Isa. 8:9-15. Ps. 2).

Feature VII. The Parousia (arrival and stay) of Christ.

A. EVENTS TO PRECEDE.

1. A Rapture of the Watchful. The object of all tribulation, as it affects the people of God, is purity of heart and life. It is as the fire that cleanses the gold from dross (Job 23: 10 1 Pet. 1:6, 7). By it the justified are made steadfast, approved by God as gold by the assayer, and are caused to set their hope on the future (Rom. 5:3, 4). They thus become partakers of the holiness of their Father (Heb. 12:10, 11), and are as grain ripe for the garner (Matt. 13: 30, 41-43. Rev. 14:14-16).

In connection with the parable of sowing and reaping the Lord pointed to the material feature that the husbandman reaps grain as soon as it is ripe, and He emphasized that this rule holds in the kingdom of God (Mark 4 :26-29, " straight-way he sendeth forth the sickle "). Thus in Israel of old there was to be gathered an early sheaf to be presented to God in His house as firstfruits of the coming harvest. Seven weeks were to elapse, during which, under the great heat of summer (= tribulation, comp. Matt. 13:6, 21), the fields would go on ripening, and then two wave-loaves were to be presented; after which harvesting

continued until the seventh month, ending with the feast of booths (Lev. 23:9-14; 15-22; 39-43). Following the harvest came the vintage season.

Rev. 14 is built upon this sequence of firstfruits, harvest, vintage, and is a most illuminating passage as to the order of events of the End Times. It presents six scenes.

(1) The Lamb on Mount Zion and with Him a company of persons purchased from the earth who are called "first fruits" and who are described as undefiled and without blemish (1-5).

(2) An angel proclaims that the hour of judgment has arrived (6, 7).

(3) The fall of Babylon the great is announced (8), meaning the destruction of the harlot Babylon of ch. 17, for it takes place before the warning not to worship the Beast (9-11), whereas the city Babylon is destroyed after his armies have been gathered' at Har-Magedon (Rev. 15:19).

(4) The Beast is seen persecuting and the saints require patience and will secure special blessedness after death (9-13). This is the Great Tribulation era. The "saints" are not Jews, as such, but are those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." 'Pious Jews, as Jews, may keep the commandments of God, but they will not believe on Jesus until they see Him in His glory (Zech. 12:10; 13:6; referring to the day of the destruction of the armies gathered against Jerusalem: 12:9). Then, as now, a Jew who believes on Jesus will become a Christian. (Eph. 2:11-18. Col. 3:10, 11).

(5) The Son of man, wearing a golden crown descends to the cloud and reaps the now ripened harvest, ripened by the Tribulation.

(6) He then descends to the earth and reaps the Vintage, shown in Rev. 19: 15 as being the destruction of the Beast and his followers. Comp. Isa. 63:1-6. Joel 3:9-13.

Notes.

i. The Mount Zion here must be the heavenly Zion (Heb. 12: 22. Gal. 4: 26), for the scene precedes the setting in of the hour of judgment and the rule of the Beast, whereas the Lord will not descend to the earthly Zion until He comes to destroy the Beast (Zech. 13:3, 4). Thus one company of the redeemed of mankind is shown in the upper heavens before the End days start. These were already pure, ripened by the earlier discipline of life; and not needing for this purpose the greater heat of the Tribulation the great, they were removed before it should set in. Firstfruits and harvest are one company but reaped in two sections, an earlier and a later.

ii. This earlier removal of some is shown in Rev. 12 also, which presents a Woman who is both heavenly and earthly at once. A portion of her family, a "mandhild," is caught up to the throne of God (= Mount Zion) before Satan is cast out of heaven and therefore before he brings up the Beast, (5). The Devil then attempts to destroy the Woman entire, but fails (13-16), whereupon he opens a war upon the "rest of her seed" (obviously part of the same family as the portion before rapt to the throne), and for this purpose he brings up the Beast (12:17; ch. 13). Thus the "mandhild" is removed to the upper heavens before the End days start, as were the firstfruits" of ch. 14; while the rest of the family must fight against the Beast, even as the "harvest" was ripened by the Tribulation.

iii. Detailing the events of the End Time (Luke 21) the Lord warned disciples of the danger of being caught by the sudden onset of that day, as a snare catches an unwary bird intent only on food. He said that "all

them that dwell on the face of all the earth" will be affected by that day, and exhorted them to unfailing watchfulness and unceasing supplication, so that "ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (34-36). As all the earth will be caught by that snare, to escape it implies a removal from the earth. Such removal and escape is shown as the portion of the "manchild" (ch. 12), and the "firstfruits" (ch. 14), and they are seen "before the Son of Man" on Mount Zion at the throne of God.

iv. To the same effect is the promise to the believers at Philadelphia that, because they had kept the word of Christ's patience, "I also will keep thee from the hour of trial which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3: 10). And to the overcomer it is then promised that he shall be associated with the name of God, with the New Jerusalem, and with the name of the Son of God. These three features are associated with the "firstfruits" of Rev. 14: 1. They are on Mount Zion, and bear the names of the Lamb and of His Father.

This company is not taken simply to the clouds, but to the throne of God on Mount Zion (cp. Ps. 122:5). There is no suggestion that the Lord descends to meet them in the clouds so this is not the event of 1 Thess. 4: 15-17, and 1 Cor. 15:50-55. Nor is there hint of resurrection accompanying this first rapture. Those concerned are simply "caught up unto God" as were Enoch and Elijah, so that they may escape the further Tribulation they will not need for the ripening of their character.

2. The next event will be the destruction of the Harlot Babylon (Rev. 17).

3. The third feature to precede the coming of Christ will be the rule of the Beast and his persecution of the godly- the Great Tribulation era.

4. During this 1,260 days the Two Witnesses will testify in Jerusalem (Rev. 11).

5. The judgments of the seven Trumpets will go on throughout this same period.

6. Then will come those terrible disturbances of nature, in the heavens and on the earth, which Christ said should follow "immediately after the tribulation of those days (Matt. 24:29. Mark 13:24. Luke 21:25), and which are shown under Seal VI in Revelation 6:12-17. It is now that the ungodly are made, to their terror, to see the throne on high, with God and the Lamb, and to know that "the great day of their wrath is come." It is the commencement of the "day of Jehovah of hosts" foretold in Isa. 2: 12-22, mentioned by Christ on the way to Golgotha (Luke 23: 27-31), and which day is a chief theme of all prophecy.

Yet this is not the actual moment for the descent of the Lord from the throne. Before that supreme moment there will take place:

7. The sealing of the pious remnant of Israel, so that the wrath of God shall not touch them (Rev. 7:1-8). These are not removed from earth, or they would not need to be marked for preservation. Compare the sealing of the godly before Nebuchednezzar's army broke into Jerusalem (Ezek. 9) and see Isa. 26:20, 21. Zeph. 2:3. Mal. 3:17.

8. The removal to "before the throne" of the innumerable company from all nations who had been sanctified in the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7:9-17).

9. The removal to the sea of glass, which is "before the throne" (Rev. 4:6), of such as had conquered in the war with the Beast (Rev. 15: 2-4).

10. The emptying on to the earth of the seven Bowls which complete the wrath of God (Rev. 15 and 16).

11. Under the last Bowl is completed the utter and per-petual destruction of Babylon the Great, the capital of the Beast. Rev. 16:19-21; 19: 1-4. Isa. 13:19-22. Jer. 50: 40; 51:48, 49, 61-64.

B. THE PAROUSIA ITSELF.

1. The Lord has been absent from the earth since His ascension. The world has not seen Him. At the moment ap-pointed by the Father (Ps. 110:1. Acts 1: 7) He will return, which will be His parousia (presence here). This will com-mence by His descent from the throne of God to the clouds. Dan. 7:13. Matt. 26:64. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. Rev. 1:7. It may, perhaps, be regarded as extending throughout the day of the Lord unto the end of the millennial kingdom.

This event will be instantaneous, like a flash of lightning (Luke 17:24); and visible, " every eye shall see Him," includ-ing those who pierced Him (Rev. 1:7). He told the Council that they should see two events; Himself (a) sitting at the right hand of power, and (b) coming with the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64). As remarked above the godless see Him at the throne under Seal 6 (Rev. 6:15-17). As those who pierced Him will at the time of Seals 6 and 7 be in Hades, it would appear that those in that world of the dead will be made to see these events. The Lord will be accompanied by all the angels. Joel 3:11. Matt. 25:31. 1 Thess. 4:16. 2 Thess. 1:7. Rev. 19:14.

This will be His apocalypse (unveiling, after having been hidden from men), and "the epiphany (forthshining) of His paroUsia" (2 Thess. 2:8). This epiphany of His glory is the blessed hope of His people (lit. 2:13).

2. At the moment of this descent to the clouds there will be the resurrection of those of the dead of all ages of time who are accounted worthy to attain unto the coming millennial age. (Dan. 12:13. Isa. 26:19. Luke 20:34. 1 Thess. 4:13-17. 1 Cor. 15:50-58. Heb. 12:35, 40. Rev. 20:4-6.) And at the same moment those ~ho will be looking for Him (Heb. 9:28. 2 Tim. 4:8. Matt. 24:42-47) will be rapt to the clouds. These all will be changed into the likeness of His body of glory and will reign with Him in the kingdom. Luke 22:28-30. Rev. 2 and 8, the promises to the overcomers: Rev. 14: 14-16; 20:4-6; etc.

Notes.

i. The placing at this stage of the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ, for the review of His people, seems unsupported in Scripture. It would appear that this review takes place after death and before the day for the first resurrection. Those believers not accounted worthy of that resurrection will remain unraised until the second resurrection at the close of the mil-lennial kingdom. 2 Cor. 5:10. Heb. 9:27. Luke 16:19-31. 2 Tim. 4:6-8. 1 Cor. 9:4, 24-27. Phil. 3:12-14. Rev. 6: 9, 11;!!: 18. On these passages see Firstfruits and Harvest 67-82. At the great white throne their names will be found ~n the book of life and they will be raised unto eternal life (Rev. 20:15); but they will have forfeited reigning with Christ, and they may in addition have been chastened between death and resurrection. Matt. 18:6. John 15:6. Heb. 6:8; 10: 26-31; 12:25-29.

ii. The stage in tihe End days when the Lord's descent to the clouds will take place is indicated.

(1) It is after the trampling down of Jerusalem by the Beast, and next after the signs in sun, moon, and stars. Luke 21:25-28. Matt. 24: 29-31. Mark 13: 24-27.

(2) It is therefore later than Seal 6 (Rev. 6:12-17). This is further shown by the Lamb being still at the throne of God after the rapture of the great multitude, which event is after Seal 6 (Rev. 7:9, 15, 17).

(3) All through the period of the Seals the Lamb is seen at the throne of God opening the Seals. He has therefore not yet come to the clouds, and by consequence His doing so cannot be until after the last Seal has been opened. Seal 1 is the parousia of Antichrist; Seal 7 includes the parousia of Christ.

(4) It is during the period of the 7th Trumpet that the reign of our Lord and His Christ " commences, and this follows the period of the Beast (Rev. 11).

(5) It is next after the period of the Beast that the Son of man is shown on a cloud gathering up His harvest (Rev. 14:9-16).

(6) Under Bowl 6 the armies of Antichrist are gathering for "the war of the great day of God." While that mobilization is in progress the Lord announces His coming as a thief (Rev. 16:12-16). So that He has not yet come up till then. Under Bowl 7 it is declared that " It has come to pass (gegonen).

Therefore the parousia commences under the last Seal, last Trumpet, and last Bowl. This agrees with 1 Cor. 15:52 that it will be " in (= 'during) the last trump," and with the announcement by the strong angel that the "mystery of God " will be completed under Trumpet 7 (Rev. 10:7; comp. Rom. 16:25-27).

(7) That the first resurrection takes place after the Tribulation is shown by the fact that those martyred by the Beast share in it (Rev. 20:4).

C. EVENTS TO FOLLOW THE PAROUSIA.

1. Having gathered His harvest to the cloud, the Lamb and His people will, it would appear, return to the Father's house, and His union with His church as His wife will be celebrated (Rev. 19:5-8). In this chapter this acclamation in heaven precedes

2. His descent to the earth to crush the grapes in the wine-press (Rev. 19:11 if.; ch. 14:14-20). In this chapter 14

(i) The "firstfruits and the Lamb are shown in the upper heavens on Mount Zion (ver. 1);

(ii) after the Tribulation (vs. 9-13) He is seen on the cloud (vs. 14-16); lastly (iii) He has come down to the earth to tread the wine-press (vs. 19-21).

These three locations correspond to the type mentioned (Lev. 23). (i) The firstfruit sheaf was waved "before Jehovah," that is, in His house, because a burnt offering accompanied, which could be offered in no other place: (ii) the harvest was gathered to the garner near to the fields:

(iii) the vintage was trodden where it grew, the press being in the vineyard. Thus the first event on earth after the gathering up of the heavenly saints to the clouds will be the destruction of the Beast and his armies. Rev. 19:11-19. Zech. 14:12-15.

3. Satan and his angels will be driven from among men and will be confined to the Abyss within the earth until the Millennium shall have ended. Isa. 24:21-23. Ps. 82:6, 7. Rev. 20:1-3.

4. "Thy Kingdom Come." The fulfilment of this prayer will follow, itself a condensation of prayers, psalms, and prophets. The mass of details as to this great Era cannot in an outline be co-ordinated. It includes:

(1) Israel. The regathering to Palestine of all Jews still scattered. They will be mostly in lands around Palestine. Their present steady migration to those regions is notable. Isa. 11:11,12; 26:13; 49:17. Jer. 31:10. Ezek. 34: 11-16. Zech. 10:8-12; etc. Israel and Judah shall be united into one nation. -Isa. 11:12, '13. Ezek. 37:11-23~ Their hearts shall.. be renewed Godwaxd, .a.nd-. they be fit and worthy to. serve the covenant of God with Abraham to be a..blessing to all nations. It will then be evident tihat the. Anglo-Israelite theory was a delusion. Ezek. a6: 22 if. jer..31: 31-34. Rom. 11:25 ft.; etc.

(2) The Nations.

(a) Those of the armies of the beast who had escaped the slaughter will be sent to thor-è . dist'añt ~±iations to announce wihat has just taken place in Pàlestinèby the ath~enf of Christ in: glory. .. ~The result.will be ~that..the...Gentiles will facilitate the return of their Jewish neighbours to Paiestine, as a sort of .peace offering to the Great King. Isa.. 66.: 18-21; 14:2; 49:22;60:1-9.

(b) There will be judgments upon, the nations around Palestine, principally because of theit ~rueilty to Israel. 'Some natiOns will be restored, but not Babylon (Isa. 13:20) or'EdOm (Jer 49 18) Isa 11 14-16, 14 to 27 Jer 46 to 51 Ezek 24 to' 3.L.

(c) Other nations will be gathered for judgment before Christ at Jerusalem. Matt. 25 : 31 if. The test will be how as individuals they had treated the brethren of Christ during the late persecutions. It is clear that the judgment is riot of nations corporately. A nation could not visit a Christian in prison (Matt. 25:31-46). (3) Jerusalem shall be rebuilt and enlarged. Jer. 31:38-40. Isa. 62:1-9. Ps. 125, " for evermore." The. temple will be built by Messiah and its services will be restored. See Eeature I (4) above. It will be the political and religious metropolis of the whole world. (Mic. 4:1-3. Zech. 14:16, 17); with Christ as King and His heavenly church as princes (Isa. 32: 1, 2. Luke 32:30. Rev. 1:5, 6; 5:9, 10; 20:4-6; 22:5), with Israel as the premier nation (Isa. 60, esp. ver. 10), and Jehovah-Jesus dwelling there, with the Shekinah glory spread over.it.as a radiant canopy (Isa. 4:5, 6. Ezek. 48:35. Zeph. 3:14-20). .As a basis upon which to construct a picture of that glad era ponder Mic. .4 : 4, with its context and implicaions.

(4) TIhe Spirit of GOd shall le poured out uhi'~ersally. In Old Testament times He came upon individuals at special times for special.work. .At Pentecost He fell upon a company of discipleS, as often: since. An outpouring upon Jerusalem will come while . the Beast is pressing his last attack (Ze~h. 12:10. joel 2:.12-1.7)~ After the return of Christ, and that gathering of all Israel to the land, He wifl be poured out upon all the remnant of Israel (Ezek. 36: 24-27. Jer. 31 ~31-34. Heb. .10:15-17) and..thèn upon "all flesh" (Joel .2:28-32). A foretaste of this outpouring came. at the commencement. of this age (Acts 2: 16-21); the complete fulfilment will be at. the commencement of the next age, the Millennium. The context in Joel Shows this: " It shall cpme to ~ass afterward I will pour out of My Spirit;" that is, after the events mentioned just before, namely, the destruction of the northern army (i.e., of the Beast), the restoration of fruitfulness to Palestine, and Jehovah being in the midst of Israel (vs. 18-27).

During the Tribulation the Spirit will work in power or the great multitude could not pass through it .with spiritual profit (Rev. 7); but this ~'ill~ be of the same nature as His, work throughout this age. , The notion that He will be withdrawn from earth prior to theEnd days is a mistake, built only upon an unfounded idea as to 2 Thess. 2: 6, 7. (5) Man, the lord of creation, being renewed so will be his realm, the earth (Rom. 8:18-23). Nature shall bear prolifi-cally, beasts shall lose their savage nature '(Ps. 72:16. Isa. 11:6-9; ch.

35; 41:17-20; 55:12, 13; 65:25). Human 'life shall be greatly prolonged. Isa. 65: 20-22.

(6) The establishing of Messiah's kingdom will be celebrated 'by a royal festival, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Rev. 19: 9. It is plain that the invited guests of this verse cannot be the "bride " of the verses just preceding. A bride is not a guest at her own wedding. This feast is the true setting of some of our Lord's parables. Luke 14:15-24. Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13. Comp. the similar pictures concerning Israel and attendant peoples in Ps. 45:9-15, and the general picture of a festival at a royal wedding in Esth. 2:16-18. The union of the King and Esther took place in the royal house; the feast followed in public. The "marriage of the Lamb" will be in the heavens, the festival will follow on the earth.

A marriage feast is but a short affair, introductory to the life to follow. It can hardly be a picture of eternity. As to the scene, such feasts in the hot lands were commonly held at night. "Outer darkness" (Matt. 8:10,11; 22: 13; 25:30) may therefore imply the dark garden around the house to which the master had returned from his journey. The reality intended is not stated, but "outer darkness" is not the same picture as a " furnace of fire."

(7) The absence of temptation by evil spirits, and the energies of the new nature through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with the removal by the judgments lately inflicted of the incorrigibly rebellious, will cause the opening of the Millennial age to be a blessed exhibition of the kingdom of God. His name will be hallowed and His will be done on earth as in heaven. But as children are born, unregenerate then as now, deterioration in the general condition will arise. Feigned obedience will enter (Ps. 18: 44; 66:3; 81:15); there will be sinners (Isa. 65:20); but the strong rule by the King and His princes, as with a rod of iron, will restrain evil and assure public order ('Ps. 72), with its vast advantages for the righteous.

Thus shall be fulfilled the purpose and covenant of God that through Abraham and His seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Gen. 12:3.

D. POST-MILLENNIAL EVENTS.

1. The Final Rebellion (Rev. 20:7-10). It will be a sadly depopulated earth over which Messiah will begin to reign (Zech. 13:8, 9. Rev. 6:7; 19:15, 18; 19:21). But as the race multiplies throughout the Millennium, at the end there will be a largely unregenerate population as numerous as the sand on the seashore. When Satan and his angels are released, and distribute themselves over the earth, it will be seen that the very best possible environment and conditions do not alter human nature. Mankind will be quickly seduced from the fear of God, a general revolt will be organized, and a concentrated attack be made against Jerusalem. This will be quelled by a devouring fire from heaven, which perhaps implies that the Shekinah glory had been withdrawn. The Devil, and his angels (Matt. 25 : 41), will be cast into the lake of fire, where his former dupes and agents, the Beast and the False Prophet, have been throughout the Millennial age. This shows that that fire torments but does not annihilate.

2. The Final Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). God's heavenly court has exercised justice all the ages through; e.g., Job 1 and 2; Kin. 22:19-23; Dan. 4:13-17; 7:9, "thrones," plural, with Rev. 4:3, 4. At the end of this age the judges of that court will give up their office to the Lamb (Rev. 4:10. Heb. 2:5; 1:6. 1 Cor. 6:2, 3), Who, with His heavenly saints, shall reign for ever and ever (Rev. 22:5). The Great White Throne is the final judicial session, for here will be declared the eternal sentence upon men, unsaved and saved, all those who had not been raised at the first resurrection before the Millennium. That there will be some whose names are in the book of life is shown by the negative form of the statement (ver. 15), "if any was not found written in the book of life he was cast into the lake of fire." This "if any one" almost suggests that

these will be exceptions rather than the majority.

3. New Heaven and New Earth. This is something further than the new heavens and new earth foretold in Isa. 65: 17 and 66:22. In that new earth there will still be sin and death (65 : 20); in this new heaven and earth there will dwell only righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13). That earlier change will be of conditions, as indicated under 4 (1) to (6) above; this will be of substance as well as of state. The method of this radical and eternal change is detailed in 2 Pet. 3:7 and 10. The dissolution of the elements seems equivalent to atomic fissure, and its accompaniments of fire, noise, and heat to the bursting of an atom bomb. But it will be then universal.

Of old there was an earthly city, Jerusalem, to be magnified in the Millennium into the more glorious "city of the great King;" but this to be transcended in turn by the Jerusalem that is above,

Of old there was a tent dwelling of God, superseded by the grand temple of Solomon, itself to be surpassed by the future temple to be built by Messiah; which also will be transcended by a heavenly tabernacle, when God shall make all things new and dwell among men (Rev. 21:2-7).

Thus also the existing universe, created good, defiled by sin, renewed for Adam to rule, redeemed by Christ its Creator, shall be lifted to higher glory under His millennial rule, and shall finally pass away to be replaced by the new heaven and earth.

The Divine purposes and providences are not capricious but follow a progressive plan from lower to higher, from the imperfect to the perfect, through the temporal to the eternal. But this advance and ascent is not by "natural law " or un-varying evolution, but largely by powerful Divine interventions, often judicial and cataclysmic, which arrest the downward course of ruin, and through which, as well as through gracious providences, the " purpose of the ages " (Eph. 3: 11) is steadily wrought out. Unto this goal God causes even His enemies and their evil deed~ to contribute.

In that new universe the most brilliant created object will be the heavenly company pictured as " the bride, the wife of the Lamb." Rev. 21:9; 22:5. Matt. 13:43. Rom. 8:21. Col. 8:4. 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Pet. 5:10.

It is of much importance that there is to be an eternal earth and nations upon it (Rev. 21: 3, 24, 26). Their sicknesses, sorrows, death will have ended for ever (Rev. 21:4; 22: 2). God will dwell with them, their own God. This shows that not all of the saved are to be removed from earth to heaven or will be of the Bride. Being " saved " and "going to heaven" are not equivalents. "Heaven or hell" are not the only alternatives. Salvation from perdition is given on the ground of the atoning death of Christ accepted by faith. Membership in that royal heavenly company is a dignity which grace offers to such of the saved as share the sufferings of Christ now, by faithful testimony to Him before His enemies. Luke 22:28-30. Matt. 10:32, 33. 2 Tim. 2:10-13. Rom. 8:17, 18. Col. 1:21-23; etc. .~. ..

On that new earth, and among those nations, Israel will for ever have first place. As priests unto God they will minister to the other nations the benefits mediated from God through the heavenly priesthood, even as gates afford access to a city (Rev. 21:12). The apostles will rule Israel (Luke 22: 30), and by submission to the rule of Israel the nations will share the benefits of the authority of God. Thus shall be fulfilled in Israel and Jerusalem the promises that their nation, city, and joy shall be everlasting, for ever (Isa. 65:18; 60:19, 20; etc.); thus shall millennial blessedness be perfected and permanent in eternal blessedness. So shall be displayed eternally that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17.)

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.

Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ~re far! from your own stedfastness.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and ever. Amen.

2 Peter 3:14, 17, 18.

Full exposition of the above themes may be found in the writer's books, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," "The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel," "Firstfruits and Harvest."

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