

The Churchward Results of the Redeemer's Return

by A.W. Pink

The sermon explores the Churchward results of Christ's second advent, including the descent of the Lord Himself, the resurrection of the sleeping saints, and the translation of living believers.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Topics: "The Return of Christ", "Hope and Transformation"

Description

A.W. Pink explores the profound implications of the Redeemer's return for the Church, emphasizing the joyous events that will unfold, including the resurrection of the saints, the transformation into Christ's likeness, and the rewarding of believers' works. He highlights the personal nature of Christ's return, where He Himself will gather His people, and the significance of the Church being presented to Him in glory. Pink reassures believers of their hope in the imminent return of Christ, urging them to live in anticipation of this glorious event.

Transcript

The Redeemer's Return

THE CHURCHWARD RESULTS OF THE REDEEMER'S RETURN

Chapter 8

"I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness."

Ps. 17:15

What will take place when our Lord comes back again to receive His blood-bought people unto Himself? What will be His portion and what will be their portion in that happy day? What will be the results of Christ's second advent insofar as they affect the Church?" We say "the Church," though it would be more accurate to speak of the saints, for Old Testament believers equally with New Testament believers, will share in the wondrous blessings and glories of that glad occasion. How then will the Redeemer's return affect the redeemed?

We leave for consideration in our next chapter the question of the worldward results of Christ's second advent. For the present, we confine ourselves to the results, Churchward, of the Savior's appearing. What will these be? What will be the order of events? Surely these questions are of entrancing interest and profound importance. And, blessed be God, they are not left unanswered. It is true that the Holy Scriptures were not written to gratify an idle curiosity, and that many questions which engage our minds are passed over in silence; nevertheless, upon everything that concerns our vital interests sufficient has been revealed to satisfy every trusting heart.

Were we to attempt an exhaustive reply to the questions asked above, we should be carried far beyond the limits of a comparatively brief chapter. All we shall now essay will be to present to our readers an outline which sets forth the most prominent features of this phase of our subject as they are unfolded in the Word of God. Seven items will engage our attention, namely:--The descent from Heaven of the Lord Himself, The Resurrection of the sleeping saints, the Translation of living believers, the Transformation of every saint into the image of our glorified Savior, the Examination and Rewarding of our works, the Presentation of the Church by Christ unto Himself, and the Manifestation of the Church with Christ in glory.

May the One who has been given to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us, illumine our understandings and draw out our hearts in adoring worship. The one Scripture which sets forth more fully than any other the order of events which shall occur at the Redeemer's return for His saints, is found in 1 Thessalonians 4. In the course of these pages we have had occasion to refer to this passage a number of times in various connections, but we would ask our readers to bear with us while we quote it once more.

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord!" (1 Thess. 4:16,17). In this passage three things claim special notice: first, the descent of the Lord Himself; second, the resurrection of the sleeping saints; third, the translation to heaven of those believers which shall be alive on the earth at that time.

Before we enlarge upon these, we would first call attention to the close relation the above passage bears to our Lord's words as recorded in the opening verses of John 14--"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you. I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

There is a four-fold correspondence between these two passages: the Savior said, "I will come again;" the apostle wrote, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." The Savior avowed, "I will receive you unto Myself;" the apostle declared that the saints shall be "caught up together to meet the Lord in the air." The Savior promised, "Where I am, there ye may be also;" the apostle assures us, "So shall we ever be with the Lord." The Savior prefaced His gracious promises by saying, "Let not your heart be troubled;" the apostle concludes by saying "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

To borrow the language of T. B. Baines, "There can surely be no questions that these passages, running so closely parallel relate to the same event." How wonderful is the verbal agreement of Holy Writ! How the comparison of one passage with another, brings out the unmistakable unity of the Scriptures! And how this demonstrates the fact that behind all the human amanuenses there was One superintending and controlling Mind! Verily our faith rests upon an impregnable rock! But to return to 1 Thessalonians 4.

Let us view 1. The Lord's descent from Heaven. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." The Lord Himself--who had compassion on the multitude, shed tears at the graveside of Lazarus, and wept over Jerusalem; who healed the sick, cleansed the leper, and restored the dead to life; who stilled the angry waves, cast out demons, and emancipated the captives of Satan; who was despised and rejected of men, condemned to a malefactor's death, and was crucified on the accursed tree; who rose again on the third day, ascended to heaven, and took His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high; who has been given the Name which is above every name, at which every knee shall yet bow, "of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Yes, "this same Jesus" shall descend from heaven with a shout. Forty days after our Crucified Savior had risen from the tomb, He ascended into Heaven "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," and took His seat upon the Father's Throne. There He has remained throughout this dispensation waiting, patiently waiting for the promised harvest. As He declared, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

The Lord Jesus was the "Corn of Wheat" that died, and the Church which is His body is the "much fruit" that will be the immediate issue out of that death; we say the "immediate issue," for in the Millennium many others shall then also enter into the salvation which was purchased upon the cross. For nineteen long centuries has the Christ of God waited for the fruit of His travail. As the apostle James says, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it" (Jam. 5:7).

Long indeed has the Lord of the harvest waited. Thus, too, we read of "The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9). Slowly but surely has the Church which is His body been growing, growing "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature in the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13). And now the time of waiting is over. The last member has been added to the Body; the last living stone has been fitted into that Temple which the Holy Spirit is now building (Eph. 2:21); the last moments of the dispensation of grace have run out.

Now has come that hour for which the Redeemer has waited so long. Now has come the time for the Head to be united to the Body. Now it is that the Savior is to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. "The Lord Himself shall descend." Unspeakably precious is this word to the hearts of His own. Christ is coming in person to effect the object which He has in view. The joy of welcoming His blood-bought people must be exclusively His own. Angels cannot be commissioned to perform it, as will be the case when He gathers His scattered people Israel (see Matthew 24:31).

Gabriel was granted the honourable privilege of announcing to Mary the first advent of Christ, yet not even to him will be entrusted this work. Christ Himself shall give the gathering shout. The Lord Himself shall descend, "I will come again" was His promise, The same blessed Lord Jesus who loved His own unto death, and who has gone to prepare a place for them, is the very One who has pledged His word to return for them. He will not send a representative to receive His people.

He will not send the arch-angel to conduct us to the Father's House. No; the Lord Himself is the One who shall descend, "descend from Heaven with a shout"--with a "shout" of triumph, with a "shout" of joy, with a "shout" of welcome. That Voice which summoned Lazarus from the tomb, shall again be heard calling the sleeping saints forth from their graves. That Voice of the Shepherd who addresseth His own sheep by

name, shall then be heard calling His "little flock" from the valley of the shadow of death unto pastures ever green.

That Voice which is "as the sound of many waters" (Rev. 1:15) shall then be heard summoning His people Home. "The Voice of my Beloved; behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills" (Song 2:8). And what is it that the Voice of the Beloved shall say? "My 'Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.

Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away" (vv. 10-18). We turn now to consider-- 2. The Resurrection of the sleeping saints. "And the dead in Christ shall rise first." This is the second blessed event which shall occur at the Redeemer's return--the sleeping saints will be awakened and raised. This brings us to a branch of our subject upon, which there is much ignorance and confusion in Christendom, generally. The idea which popularly obtains is that of a general resurrection at the end of time.

So deeply rooted is this belief and so widely is it held that to declare there will be two resurrections--one of saints and another of sinners, the two being separated by a thousand years--is to be regarded as a setter forth, of strange ideas and extravagant fancies. Nevertheless, the teaching, of Scripture upon this point is exceedingly plain and explicit. Probably many of those who will read these pages are already dear upon this distinction, but for the sake of those who are not we must briefly outline the teaching of God's Word upon this subject, first quoting, however, from one whose writings have been justly esteemed by Christians of every shade of thought.

John Bunyan who was certainly a close student of the Divine Oracles wrote, "Now when the saints that sleep shall be raised thus incorruptible, powerful, glorious and spiritual; and also those that then shall be found alive, made like them; then forthwith, before the unjust are raised, the saints shall appear before the judgment-seat of the Lord Jesus Christ, there to give an account to their Lord the Judge of all things they have done; and to receive a reward for their good according to their labor.

They shall rise, I say, before the wicked, they being themselves the proper 'children of the resurrection,' that is, those that must have all the glory of it, both as to pre-eminency, and sweetness; and, therefore, they are said, when they rise, to rise from the dead; that is, in their rising, they leave the reprobate world behind them. And it must be so, because also the saints will have done their account, and beset upon the throne with Christ as kings and priests with Him to judge the world, when the wicked world are raised."

But without citing human testimony any further, let us turn to the teaching of Christ and the inspired writings of His apostles. On one occasion the Lord said, "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13,14). Now if there is to be but one resurrection--a general resurrection of all the dead--then why did our Lord make the above distinction and qualification of the resurrection of the just"?

Again, in Luke 20:34, 35 we read, "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. But they which shall be accounted worthy, to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage." What can be the meaning of such words as "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead" if all the dead alike are sure of participating in an indiscriminate resurrection. Worthiness to obtain the resurrection from the dead

certainly implies there will be some who are not esteemed worthy, and hence will not be partakers of the resurrection here mentioned; therefore, the conclusion is irresistible that there must be two distinct resurrections.

That there will be is further seen from the language of John 5:28, 29--"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which, all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Here the two resurrections are sharply distinguished both as to name and participants, and as we shall see, there is to be a long interval of time between them.

The testimony of the apostolic Epistles is in strict harmony with the teaching of our Lord recorded in the four Gospels. In 1 Corinthians 15:21-23 we read, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." It is important to notice that the resurrection of the wicked is not contemplated in this chapter at all, but is strictly limited to the resurrection of Christ and His saints.

The words "all be made alive" are qualified by the clause which immediately precedes them. It has reference solely to those who are "in Christ." Christ Himself is the "firstfruits" (the reference is to the type of Lev. 23:10) and the harvest that is garnered at His return are "they that are Christ's." Again, we are told that the people of God in Old Testament times who refused to accept deliverance from death at the hands of their persecutors, did so "that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35) which expression is quite meaningless if there is but one general resurrection in which saints and sinners shall alike participate.

One other Scripture yet remains to be considered, namely Revelation 20:4-6 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Here we learn not only that the resurrection of the saints is quite distinct from that of the wicked, but we are also expressly told that an interval of a thousand years lies between the two. It were meaningless to speak of the resurrection of the "blessed and holy" as the "first resurrection" if there is no second resurrection of the wicked to follow.

The righteous shall all be raised before the Millennium begins, but the lost shall not be raised until its close. Thus we see that the uniform teaching of the New Testament respecting the resurrection of sleeping believers is in perfect accord with our Thessalonian Scripture--"The dead in Christ shall rise first." None but the "dead in Christ" will come forth from their graves in response to the assembling shout of our descending Lord at the time of His second advent. But now consider, 3.

The Translation of living believers. "Then we which are alive and remain (on the earth) shall be caught up together with them (the resurrected ones) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." In connection with this statement we would call attention to another Scripture which at first sight appears to have no bearing upon it at all. We refer, to the words of our Lord recorded in John

12:23--"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

We hesitate to set forth our own understanding of this passage because it differs widely from the generally received interpretation of it. It is from no desire to pander to the modern and miserable craving for novel expositions of Scripture that we advance our own view, but simply because necessity is laid upon us. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me"--the word "men" inserted in italics has no equivalent in the original, and hence we must understand the "all" to refer to all believers.

The question we would now raise is, What does the "drawing unto Christ" here have reference to? Personally, we do not think it has any reference to salvation, for where coming to Christ for salvation is in view it is the "Father" who is said to do the "drawing." This may be verified by a reference to John 6:44, where we read, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." Therefore we submit that our Lord's words here point to the catching up of the saints at the time of His return, that it is then He will "draw" them all "unto Himself."

The words "I will draw all unto Me" correspond very closely with that other word of His which has reference to this same event--"I will receive you unto Myself" (John 14:3). We would further suggest that the reason why this "drawing of all believers unto Himself at the time of His return is linked with His "lifting up" is to show us that this consummating blessing, like every other we enjoy, is based upon His cross-work for us. Finally; it is highly significant, and seems to corroborate our interpretation, that in the verse immediately preceding the one now under consideration, our Lord said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

It was then--"now"--at the Cross, that the Divine sentence was passed but it will not be until the Rapture that it will receive its execution. It is immediately following the "catching up" of the saints, their "drawing" to Christ, that God's "judgment" will fall upon "this world," as it is then also that its "prince"--"Satan"--will be "cast out" of his present domains (see Rev. 12:7-9). Who are the ones that shall be "drawn" unto Christ at that day?)The answer is found in our Thessalonian Scripture--"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

We have already contemplated the resurrection of the sleeping saints, let us now say a few words concerning those believers who shall be alive on earth at that time. It is often said, "There are many things in this life which are uncertain, but one thing is sure: we must all die; we must all pay nature's debt." Nothing is more common than to hear such affirmations as those which set death before the believer as his inevitable prospect. Such assertions are regarded as axiomatic.

Frequently they are repeated from the pulpit. But not so do the Scriptures teach. The Word of God distinctly declares, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51,52). So that instead of it being certain that all will die, it is absolutely certain that all believers will not die. A whole generation of Christians, namely, those that are alive upon the earth when our Lord descends from Heaven, will be "changed in a moment," and without passing through death at all, shall be caught up together with the resurrected saints to meet the Lord in the air.

The prospect which God's Word sets before every believer is the imminent return of Christ. Not a dread anticipation of death, but "looking for the Savior" is to be our daily occupation. Translation to Heaven and not the grave is our goal. That is why it is termed "that blessed hope," and that is why we are said to be "begotten again unto a living hope"--a living hope in a dying scene. This hope was active in the hearts of the first-century saints. The Thessalonians had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

and to wait for His Son from heaven."

They were waiting for Christ not death. Observe that in our text the apostle includes himself among the number of those who might be alive on the earth at the time of Christ's second advent--"Then we (not "ye") which are alive and remain shall be caught up;" and again, "We shall not all sleep." The beloved apostle was not looking for 'the king of terrors' but for "the King of Glory." Lord, 'tis for Thee, for THY coming we wait; The sky not the grave is our goal: The rapture, not death, we gladly await, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, O my soul.

A striking illustration and type of the removal to heaven of those believers which shall be on the earth at the time of our Lord's return is found in the rapture of Enoch, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb. 11:5). Here was a man of like passions with us, who was raptured to Heaven without seeing death. Such is the blessed prospect which Scripture sets before the Christian as his present hope. We repeat, that all believers on earth at the time of our Lord's descent into the air, shall altogether escape the gloomy portals of the tomb and be translated to Heaven to meet the Lord and be for ever with Him.

This will be the fulfillment of our Lord's promise "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Observe that our Lord does not say, "I will come again and take you unto Myself." but "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." The thought suggested by this distinction is exceedingly precious. "Taking" is an action confined to myself. I may enter an empty room and take a book from the table. But receiving is an action that brings in another. If I "receive" a book the necessary inference is that someone handed it to me.

Exactly so will it be at the Rapture. The sailors of God are not left alone in this cold wilderness-world. The "other Comforter, even the Spirit of truth" has come to take up His abode in the Church, and it is from Him that the Lord Jesus will "receive" it. (For this beautiful thought I am indebted to George Huckleby's book "Surely I come quickly.") And observe further that our Lord did not say "to Heaven," or "to the Father's House," but "unto Myself." The person of Christ is to be the Object before the eye and heart.

Thus it was with the martyr Stephen--"Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Thus it was with the apostle Paul--"To depart and be with Christ which is far better;" and again, "absent from the body, present with the Lord." The heart occupied with Him. "To meet the Lord in the air." Why should the Church meet the Lord in "the air," rather than on the earth? We would suggest a twofold reason. First, Because the Church is heavenly not earthly. It is heavenly in its origin (1 Cor. 15:48).

It is heavenly in its calling (Heb. 3:1). It is heavenly in its citizenship (Phil. 3:20). It is heavenly in its blessings (Eph. 1:3). It is heavenly in its destiny (1 Pet. 1:4). Therefore will the Church meet its Head in the "air"--the atmospheric heavens. Second; I believe this joyous meeting between the Lord and His blood-bought people is to be in the air, rather than in the Heaven of heavens, for the purpose of privacy. The eyes of the world shall not gaze upon that holy scene, nor will even the angels (so far as Scripture indicates) witness that first moment when the Redeemer shall meet the redeemed.

"And so shall we ever be with the Lord," which, as we have seen, corresponds with His own blessed promise, "That where I am there ye may be also." Wondrous privilege! Marvelous prospect! Truly, such love "passeth knowledge." The place which is due to the Son is the same place which shall be accorded the sons. We are made "joint-heirs with Christ." His inheritance and blessedness shall be shared with His redeemed. He shall come Himself to conduct us to His place! But are we, shall we be, lit, to dwell in such a realm?

The answer to this question leads us to consider, 4. The Transformation of each believer into the Image of our glorified Savior. In the beginning, man was made in the image and likeness of God, but sin came in and as the consequence that image has been defaced and that likeness marred. Has then the purpose of Jehovah been thwarted? Not so: "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever" (Ps. 33:11). Therefore it is written, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29).

The time when this purpose and promise of God will be realized is at the Return of His Son. It is then that God's elect will be completely "conformed to the image of His Son." It is then that they shall "be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." It is then that "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." But to particularize. In Romans 7:24 the question is asked, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Part of the answer to this interrogation is recorded in Romans 8:11--"But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." This Scripture has been the occasion of considerable controversy of late and some wild fancies have been indulged concerning it, yet its meaning is quite simple. The "quickenings of our mortal bodies" does not refer to resurrection, nor to "healing," but to that "change" which shall take place in the physical beings of those believers on earth at the Redeemer's return.

Here, as everywhere, the apostle has the "blessed hope" before his heart and he would interpose nothing between (not even death and resurrection) the present moment and the realization of that hope. The "quickenings of our mortal bodies," the "changing" of them in a moment, is described in Philippians 3:20,21--"For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

These present corruptible bodies of ours shall be transformed into bodies like unto that glorious body now worn by our Lord. That is, like His body as it appeared on the mount of transfiguration--dazzling in its splendor; like unto His body as it appeared unto Saul as he journeyed to Damascus--scintillating with a brilliancy which surpassed the shining of the midday sun. What a glorious transformation that will be! Each saint will be given a body of glory fitted to and for the scene to which he shall go, as his present body is fitted to this earth.

Scientists tell us that the little sparkling diamond which we admire so much, was once a piece of carbon, a fragment of charcoal which has undergone a marvelous transformation, converting the little piece of black charcoal into the resplendent jewel. This, perhaps, is Nature's type of the glorious transformation that awaits us, when the Savior shall take our present mortal body and fashion it like unto His glorious body. Physical transformation is not all that awaits the believer.

At our Lord's return there will be a mental, moral and spiritual transformation too. In 1 John 3:2 we are told, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." The emphasis here is often thrown upon the wrong words. Some read this verse as though it had reference to present ignorance of our future condition, the clause "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," being understood to signify "We don't really know now what we shall yet be."

But this is a mistake, for we do "know" as this very verse informs us--"we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. The emphatic words are "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." What we are really going to be like awaits its manifestation till our Lord's appearing. Let us illustrate. I hold in my hand a small seed: it is unlovely in appearance and gives no promise at all of what it will ultimately become. It doth not yet appear what it shall be. But I plant that seed in the ground, and a few weeks later it has become a strong plant, and one morning I wake and find it covered with the most beautiful flowers.

Now the potentialities of that little seed are fully manifested. So it is with the believer. He looks at his own heart and wonders if after all he is a child of God. His body is just the same as the bodies of unbelievers, and viewed by the eye of sense he seems to be no different from them in anywise. No; because his real "life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3)--it doth not yet appear what he shall be, nevertheless he knows (by faith) that when Christ shall appear, he shall be like Him, for he shall see Him as He is.

"We shall be like Him." Who dare limit this exceeding great and precious promise? "Like Him" physically, for our vile body shall then be "fashioned like unto His glorious body." "Like Him" mentally! Today we are very unlike Him mentally: our minds now are often harassed with evil thoughts, they are clouded and darkened by the effects of the Fall, and are subject of too many limitations; but when Christ appears, that which is "perfect" shall come and then, no longer shall we see through a glass darkly and know in part, but we shall know as we are known.

We shall be "like Him" morally and spiritually. Sin will be erased from our being; every trace and effect of the Fall shall be eradicated from our persons. Then will God's predestinating purpose be fully realized. Then shall we be completely "conformed to the image of His Son." Blessed transformation! Glorious prospect! We shall be like Him. "High in the Father's house above My mansion is prepared, There is the home, the rest I love, And there my bright reward.

With Him I love, in spotless white,

In glory I shall shine;

His blissful presence my delight,

His love and glory mine.

All taint of sin shall be removed,

All evil done away;

And I shall dwell with God's Beloved

Through God's eternal day."

5. The Examination and Rewarding of the believer's works. "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). If it is true that the general teaching of Christendom upon the subject of the Resurrection is unscriptural, the popular conception of future judgment is still more erroneous. It is generally believed that at the end of time saints and sinners shall all stand before the judgment-bar of God; that they will be divided into two great classes--"the sheep and the goats;" that those whose names are found written in the book of life will pass into Heaven, and that the wicked will be consigned to the Lake of Fire.

For this conception (excepting the last clause) there is not a single verse of Scripture when rightly interpreted. So far as believers are concerned the Sin question has been closed for ever, for their sins were all judged at the Cross where their Substitute died--the Just for the unjust. Consequently, all who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are for ever beyond the Curse of the Law. This is clear from our Lord's own words--"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation," or as the Revised Version more correctly renders it, "shall not come into judgment" (John 5:24).

How erroneous then the prevailing conception; and how absurd! Shall the apostle Paul who has already been in Heaven for more than eighteen hundred years, yet have to appear before the judgment-bar of God, in order to ascertain whether he shall spend eternity in Heaven or in the Lake of Fire? How could this be, when we are distinctly told "There is therefore now no condemnation (judgment) to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Furthermore, observe that it is said of the sleeping saints they are "raised in glory" (1 Cor. 15:43).

How then could a glorified saint be consigned to the Lake of Fire? And if there is no possibility of him going there, then what need is there for any Assize to decide his eternal destiny? No; the judgment of the Great White Throne concerns the wicked only. But are we not told in 2 Corinthians 5:10 "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body; according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"? Yes, we are.

Let us then examine this Scripture. First, it is to be remarked that the Greek word which is here translated "judgment-seat" is "Bema." At the time the New Testament was written the Bema was not a judicial bench upon which a judge sat, passing sentence upon criminals (an entirely different word was used for it), but was throne from which the judge distributed prizes to the victors in the games. Such will be the Bema of Christ. In the second place, the purest of the appeasing of believers "before the Bema of Christ" is not to test their title and fitness for Heaven, but in order that their works may be examined and their service rewarded.

A Scripture which throws much light upon this is to be found in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made fire: for the day will declare it: because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." we learn that the foundation of the believer's salvation is Jesus Christ Himself and that his subsequent works and service likened to a building which he erects upon this foundation. different kinds of works which the believer performs--good and bad--are regarded as two classes of materials which he employs in the building he is erecting. In the day of Christ's appearing his building is to be tested by fire, which means that his works will be examined and the motives which produced them carefully scrutinized.

Those works which will endure the searching fire will be rewarded, those which are worthless will and in the latter instance, the individual, though saved, will "suffer loss." When the Lord returns, every servant will be called upon to give an account of his stewardship. Notice will be taken of how our talents were employed and how our time was redeemed. The whole life of the believer will be examined in detail in the light of the Throne and his deeds measured by the Divine standard.

Words spoken now and actions performed in this world will then be weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary. Things will then be seen in their true colors and labeled at their real worth by the impartial hand of the Omniscient Christ. The difference between the two classes of materials mentioned in the above Scripture points to a most solemn truth. "Gold, silver, precious stones" are of intrinsic value, whereas "wood, hay, stubble" are a natural growth. In Scripture "gold" symbolizes the Divine nature, "silver" Divine redemption, and "precious stones" the Divine glory.

Those works of the believer which have issued from the Divine nature within us, are based upon Christ's redemption, and have been performed for God's glory, will receive a reward; but those which were wrought by those who felt they must do something, those performed in the energy of the flesh, those done merely for self-aggrandizement will all be burned up. What a conflagration there will be in that day! What surprises there will be at the Bema of Christ! An hundred-dollar subscription, given to get a name, will be ashes in the day; while a dime given to help the poor for the Lord's sake will receive an imperishable reward. "Deeds of merit as we thought them He will show us were but sin: Little acts we had forgotten He will tell us were for Him."

No work done out of love for Christ will lose its reward. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints" (Heb. 6:10). All that endures the test of that day will be publicly, abundantly and eternally rewarded. There, before His Father and in the presence of the holy angels, our gracious Redeemer will delight to say to the rewarded one, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:23).

The subject of rewards is a wide one and we can only deal briefly with it here. Four crowns are mentioned in the New Testament the Incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25), which is the reward for faithful service; the crown of Righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8), which is given to those who love Christ's appearing; the crown of Glory (1 Pet. 5:4), which is reserved for faithful pastors who have tended the flock; and the crown of Life (Rev. 2:10), which is a special reward reserved for martyrs.

Each crown is conditional, conditional upon faithfulness to an absent Christ. But to return now to 2 Corinthians 5:10. The prospect of our manifestation before the Bema of Christ is both joyous and solemn. It is "joyous" because it is then that everything will come out into the light and all misunderstandings will be cleared up; because everything which will not endure the Divine test will be "burned up;" and because every work which was done with an eye single to God's glory will receive commendation from our blessed Lord Himself.

It is "solemn" because then it will be seen how much of our work was nothing but "wood, hay, and stubble;" because we shall then discover how sadly we had failed to "redeem the time;" and because we shall "suffer loss." Ah! my brethren it behooves us to live in the light of that day now so near at hand. Let our chief ambition be that all we say and do shall meet with the approval of our Lord at the Bema. Yes, the contemplation of the Bema is solemn and searching. He who has lived in selfish ease and carnal gratification will be the loser throughout all eternity.

But he who has "denied himself" out of love for and gratitude to the Savior, shall yet hear His "Well done" and enter into His joy. 6. The Presentation of the Church by Christ to Himself. When every saint of God shall have been made like Christ, made "like Him" physically, mentally, morally and spiritually, and after each individual's life and works have been examined before the Bema, then is the Church publicly

presented and Ephesians 5:25-27 is fulfilled--"Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

The word "present" here means "to set alongside of." Christ is yet going to set the Church alongside of Himself. The Church will share His glory and reign with Him throughout the Millennium. As saith the Scriptures--"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne" (Rev. 3:21). The Church will then have been fitted for this exalted position, for observe that Christ presents the Church to Himself "a glorious Church." In that day none of the defiling "spots" of sin shall be found in the Church, and not a "wrinkle"--the mark of age and corruption--shall mar its beauty, but with youth eternally renewed the Church shall then perfectly reflect the glory of Christ.

Then shall He be able to say, "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee" (Song of Sol. 4:7). Another Scripture which tell of the presentation of the Church is to be found in Jude 24--"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." We believe the reference here to the "exceeding joy" is that of Christ Himself.

This was "the joy" that was set before Him when He endured the Cross and despised the shame (Heb. 12:2). Closely connected with the public Presentation of the Church is, 7. The Manifestation of the Church with Christ. The last time the world saw the Lord Jesus He was alone--alone in death. But when He returns to this earth He will not be alone. His saints will accompany Him. He is the "Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), and when He appears again they will be with Him.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him" (Ps. 126:6). Yes, that blessed One who humbled Himself to become the Sower shall return with "His sheaves"--"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints" (Jude 1:14). "The Spirit Himself beareth Witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, theft heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:16-18). Observe that "the glory" here mentioned is to be revealed, and revealed in us; and further, that it is a glory which we shall share with Christ glorified together". When will this glory be "revealed in us" together with Christ? The answer is at the time of His return to this earth, far "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4)--"in glory" for before this, our present bodies will have been 'fashioned like unto His glorious body."

It is in connection with this appearing of Christ with His saints in glory that we read, "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). In that day the sons of God--whose life is now "hid with Christ in God"--will be manifested, manifested with Christ in glory. Then will our Lord's prayer be fully answered--"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me:, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.

And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:20-22). "Soon shall come that glorious day When, seated on Thy throne, Thou shalt to wondering

world's display That Thou with us art One."

These are the Results of the Redeemer's Return as they affect the Church-results in part for the half hath not been told. The Lord Himself descends from Heaven with a shout, awakening the sleeping saints and translating them together with living believers, to meet Him in the air. Then, all are conformed to the image of God's Son and made "like Him." Next, the saints appear before the Bema that their works may be examined and their service rewarded. Finally, as Christ prepares to return to the earth, He sets the Church, now glorious within and without, alongside of Himself, and as He appears before the eyes of the world the Church appears with Him, to be the object of never-ending wonderment and admiration as it is seen what great things the Lord hath wrought for those who were by nature children of wrath and deserving of nought but eternal condemnation. In view of such a prospect must we not long for God to hasten the glad day of our Lord's return, and are we not compelled to cry "Even so, Come Lord Jesus"!

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