

THINGS WHICH ARE COMING:

OR,

THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

“ I am the root and the offspring of David,
And the bright and Morning star.
And the Spirit and bride say, Come.
And let him that heareth say, Come.
And let him that is athirst come,
And whosoever will,
Let him take the water of life freely.

WELL, John, I have been looking very much lately at the Lord Jesus as the “ Bright and Morning Star,” and think I see very plainly that when He comes to fetch His people home to dwell with Himself for ever, He will come as that beautiful Star of the morning—quiet, and without any outward display in any way whatever.

Yes, James, in blessing He went away, and in blessing will He return. (Acts i. 9.) And how happy it is to be looking for His coming, in this simple and beautiful manner? it has such an attraction for our souls. It also gives us to see other things so clearly and plainly too; because the morning star appears before the night has really passed away, and while as yet the greatest darkness is over the land. This is the case now; therefore at any moment He may come. Perhaps when He is least expected, His voice may be heard in the clouds calling us up to meet Him in the air. Thus He will fulfil His parting

promise and take us to His Father's house, the place He is gone to prepare. (John xiv. 2, 3.)

This is a bright prospect for our souls, John, and what real joy it gives to know, that it is sure and certain to all who believe in His name! Made sure in His own precious blood. And you do not really think that we are to be looking for anything to take place before the Lord Jesus comes for His church, nor yet for present things in any way to get better, do you?

No, James, I do not, but quite the contrary. The word of God tells us that things will get worse and worse, and that the darkness will go on increasing more and more. There is a happy day as yet for this poor world, but that is in reserve, until the Lord Jesus has been first for His heavenly people, as the Bright and Morning Star. Because He must come as such, before He can appear as the Rising Sun, in blessing to the world at large. Therefore after He has taken His church home to His Father's house and settled everything with them up there; then He will return to the earth, and to those who fear His name, as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings; and will bring in a millennial day down here, a day of joy and gladness for His people Israel, and also for the whole creation, by delivering it from the bondage of corruption under which it is now labouring. The Lord Jesus will in that day hush its groans, and bring it into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Rom. viii. 19-22.)

Well, John, it makes me quite glad to think that there is such a time of rest and peace coming for God's ancient people Israel, and also for this poor, groaning, suffering creation, for its sighings are very great. This will be when He comes to the earth in glory, will it not? and then His saints will come with Him, in all the joy and blessedness of that day. (Zech. xiv. 4, 5.)

Yes, James, they will. He will appear in this dark scene as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth:

even a morning without clouds : as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Thus He will bring in that day of universal peace and blessing when all creation will rejoice ; but especially God's ancient people Israel. As we read, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it ; shout, ye lower parts of the earth ; break forth into singing, ye mountains. O forests and every tree therein ; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himself in Israel." And "men will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. ii. 4 ; xliv. 23.) In that day, "the battle bow will be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the heathen, and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river, to the ends of the earth." (Zech. ix. 10.)

What beautiful promises these are, John : and every one of them will be fulfilled, will they not, in that day ?

They will, James : and how happy it is to know that the time is drawing near ! And these two similes, of the morning star and the rising sun, make that blessed hope of His coming for His church, and also His glorious appearing to the world, very plain and simple.

The Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as the Bright and Morning Star in the last chapter of the New Testament, in connection with His bride, the church : and as the rising Sun in the last chapter of the Old, as the future hope of His earthly people.

This is quite in keeping with the ways of God, whose delight is to make the last first, and the first last. Therefore He will take believers into heavenly glory before He restores His ancient people Israel to their earthly inheritance. The one He will translate from earth to heaven in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. (Cor. xv. 51, 52.) Then after that He will gather the other out from among the nations

where they have been scattered, and will bring them into the land which He gave unto their father's ; and take them to be His own earthly people again for ever. "He will say unto the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back ; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth ; every one that is called by my name, for I have created him for my glory." (Isa. xlivi. 5, 7 ; Jer. xxxiii. 36.)

This is a happy future, John, for the poor Jews, who have been driven out of their land so long, and are now wandering up and down in the earth, away from the home of their fathers. And you really do think they will be all brought back again, do you ?

Yes, James, this is so very certain. God has made nothing more plain in His word than this. And He would have us ever to remember it with joy and gladness ; and to be looking out for the coming of the Lord Jesus as the Bright and Morning Star, because He must come as such for His church, before the day can dawn for His earthly people Israel.

The morning star is the harbinger of the day, though the time of its coming is while it is yet night, and in the coldest and darkest part of it too. Those who are about tell us, that it is never so intense as a little before the day breaks. But in a short time the sun appears, and the darkness passes away, and the light shines forth, and all is clear and plain. Just so will it be in this coming day. Some call it the star of the morning ; and how earnestly do they who are about in the dark cold night look for it ! And with what joy they hail it when they see it ! for they know the night will soon be over.

I can quite enter into this, John, and I can see too how beautifully true it will be of Him who is both the Morning Star and the Sun of righteousness also, and how well it is to be looking for Him in this delightful manner.

It is, James, and I do hope we shall ever keep His coming thus before our souls, because it will not only

fill our hearts with joy and gladness, but it will also give us to see things around us as they really are. This is most important, for the days are very deceiving and evil. And according to the figure we find the coldness and darkness increasing on every hand : it is becoming more and more intense every hour. But oh, how sweet it is to know this loving Saviour, not only as the One who died and rose again, and made us His for ever ; but also to have Him even now, as the "Day Star" of our hearts in the midst of the gloom, lighting up our path as we pass along, so that we may not stumble or miss our way. (2 Pet. i. 19.)

Well, John, this is indeed lovely, thus to have Him with us in this beautiful manner day by day, even before the day of glory come. And I am sure we need Him, for, as you say, it is a dark scene through which we are passing. And we can no more track our way through the gloom, than we could deliver our souls from the darkness at first ; we need Him for the one, the same as we did for the other. (John xv. 5.)

We do, James ; and it is well to be kept mindful of it, for we are so prone to forget. But He has said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John viii. 12.) The great thing is to follow hard after Him, having no will or way of our own, and then He will be sure to guide us, and we shall be found doing the right thing in the right way ; that which He would have us do, and He will be glorified in us.

We shall also have the joy of knowing that in our little measure we are working with Him. And He is doing great things in these last days for His beloved people, as well as sending out His precious gospel far and wide to the poor world ; calling one here, and another there, out of the darkness into His marvellous light. This He is doing more and more, as the night is drawing to a close ; and He will continue to do so, till the last one be gathered in. Then He will come.

This might be even to-day, John ?

Yes, James, it might, and even this very hour ; no one can tell. God has reserved the time in His own eternal counsel ; and it is well for us that He has, so that we may be ever ready, waiting, and watching, as good servants who wait for their Lord, and not allowing ourselves to be entangled with present things, but each one of us just doing the little things, He has given us to do, and doing them properly too ; thus filling the various positions in which He has placed us so as to please Him, and ever ready to do the smallest thing He might give us to do in any way to help on His glorious work. For He is blessing on every hand, notwithstanding the increasing darkness and iniquity all around ; and sinners are being saved with an everlasting salvation, and brought into association with Himself up there in heavenly glory. Not one of His own will be left behind in this evil scene : God's word and Spirit will find them out wherever they are, and they will be to the praise of the glory of His grace, throughout the countless ages of eternity.

Every living stone in that heavenly building is needed, and not one can be lacking ; the building would not be complete if it were so. The least is needed as well as the greatest, so that every one must be there.

It is so happy to know this, and I hope we shall be able to enter into the joy of it more and more, and be found using every moment for Him till He come.

I hope so, too, John : and I find the Lord Jesus did not speak of Himself as the Bright and Morning Star till He came to the book of the Revelation.

No, James, He did not : and it is well to see this ; because when He left His beloved people, His parting promise was that He would come again, and receive them to Himself, that where He is there they may be also. This was to be the one joyful hope of their souls at all times. Therefore when they found them-

selves surrounded by failure and darkness on every hand, as is seen in the book of the Revelation—the churches all in confusion—then it was that He presented Himself to them, as the Bright and Morning Star, as a fresh attraction for their souls individually, to cheer them on, so that they might not be occupied with the surrounding gloom.

Hence it is well for us to be looking for His coming in this lovely and beautiful manner, so that the darkness around may not gain upon our souls ; thus we shall be kept pure and separate for Himself. (2 Tim. ii. 22.) Beside this the Lord Jesus at the same time told them, that He was coming quickly, and His reward was with Him to give to every man according as his work shall be. (Rev. xxii. 12.)

This was most encouraging for the faithful among them, and it kept them with girded loins, bright, and happy, in the midst of it all ; thus having Him as the one absorbing object of their souls. It also kept their hearts true to God, and each other. At the same time it called out their love and sympathy to the poor world, in taking to them His precious gospel ; His invitation of love and mercy saying, “Let him that is athirst, *Come*. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Rev. xxii. 17.)

How nice it is, John, to see Him giving this water of life to-day, from off the throne of God, as freely, and as fresh as ever !

It is, James, most delightful. It also makes us glad to wait patiently for Him, however much we may long to see Him, and be with Him ; because every day that He is waiting is a day of salvation for poor sinners : He not being willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. iii. 9-15.)

What real joy it gives to know this, and also to know that He is the same kind, unchangeable, loving Saviour now, that He ever was ! The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; in Him there is no variableness,

neither shadow of turning. Therefore this water of life which He is giving to-day, is the same as that which He gave to the poor woman by the "well of Sychar," when He was down here ; and those who drink live for ever ; it is in them a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. (John iv. 14.) And how blessed, eternally blessed, are they who partake of it while they have the opportunity ! for soon it will be withdrawn, never to be offered again. But now God, as it were, is pressing this cup of life to the lips of poor sinners, that they may drink and live. According to His own word, He is compelling them to come in, that His house may be filled. (Luke xiv. 23.)

But how solemn it is to think that when the Lord Jesus comes, this blessed invitation will cease : the door will be shut, and this glorious opportunity gone for ever, to those who have rejected it. (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.) This makes that beautiful word so very urgent, "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." Do not put it off ; do not delay a moment. God never gives a promise of life for to-morrow ; but it is always *now* ; for we know not what a day may bring forth.

This is very solemn indeed, John, as you say, and I hope it will have its proper weight upon each of our souls. And there is another thing to notice respecting the morning star as a symbol ; which is, that they only see it who are up and awake ; they who are sleeping never see it. But when the sun rises that is seen by every one. (Rev. i. 7.) And you do not think the Lord Jesus will be seen by the world, when He comes for His church, as the Bright and Morning Star, do you ? or how ?

No, James, I do not. The morning star never affects the world in any way ; because they are sleeping at the time of its coming ; it is the sun that affects them. And truly the world is sleeping now, in every sense of the word, as it regards these glorious realities.

(1 Thess. v. 6.) They know nothing of them, neither do they want to know. Therefore they will not see the Lord Jesus when He comes to take His bride home to His Father's house. Because He will come in this quiet and beautiful manner, and His church will be caught up to meet Him in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

The Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout ; and the first thing which will take place will be, the dead in Christ will rise and leave their graves. And we who are alive and remain will never die at all, but these vile bodies will be changed, and "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. iv. 17, 18.)

This is very wonderful indeed, John. And very delightful too, thus to think that we may never die at all, or know what the cold dark grave is.

Well, James, it is delightful, as you say, and very lovely too ; our souls rejoice in it exceedingly ; but still there is nothing to fear, should we be called to lay our heads on a dying pillow. God's people mostly find it to be the happiest moment of their lives ; however much they may have dreaded it before it came. God's word calls it "*sleep—sleep in Jesus.*" And never did a mother put her sweet babe to sleep so softly, and so tenderly, as the Lord Jesus puts to sleep His beloved people, though in some cases it may appear not to be so, by those who are looking on.

He Himself passed through death, and thereby made it so easy for us in every way. He robbed the grave of its victory, and death of its sting. The horrors of the tomb to believers should be gone, because He has been there. And no sooner do they close their eyes on things down here, than they open in the light of His eternal presence. Absent from the body, they are present with the Lord, where a tear or sigh is never known, but one unhindered, blissful enjoyment of Himself for evermore.

Yet they are not fully satisfied, they are still looking on to the time when they will have their bodies raised and glorified, fashioned like unto His glorious body. (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) Thus corruption will put on incorruption ; and this mortal will put on immortality. (1 Cor. xv. 53.)

Then, James, as it regards us who are alive and remain, never to die at all, God has given us a beautiful picture of this in the case of Enoch, who did not see death, but was translated. "He was not, for God took him." (Gen. v. 24.)

"Enoch walked with God," doing the little things which God gave him to do, so as to please Him ; and letting his little light shine out to those around, when all of a moment he was gone—"caught up." No one saw him go ; he might have been out in the field doing the needed work of the day ; or he might have been employed at home in some other way, or on a journey, we know not. We are simply told that "he was not found, for God had translated him."

Well, John, this is a delightful picture, as you say ; and how very simple too, so that every one can understand it !

Yes, James, and just so will it be when the Lord Jesus comes as that lovely Star of the morning. His beloved people will be caught away in like manner ; they will never see death or the grave ; neither will the world see them go ; they will not be found, for He will have translated them. He will have caught them up ; thus taking them from earth to heaven, out of this scene, into His own immediate presence, there to enjoy His company in unclouded glory, through one eternal day.

Then, John, you really think that this is more to be desired than death, do you ? that instead of putting off this body, to have it changed, and mortality swallowed up of life ? (2 Cor. v. 4.)

Yes, James, to be sure I do ! I cannot think of anything more lovely and beautiful than to have all that

is mortal about us swallowed up, and nothing left but life and glory ; and that too, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Scripture always speaks of this as desirable for the believer, and never puts death before us as our hope in any way whatever. Death may be a deliverance from sin and sorrow, as it most surely is, and everything connected with it. It also gives us a place in God's presence at once, away from this scene of iniquity and woe, and therefore it is most happy, for in "his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Still it is not the fulness of the Christian's hope, blessed as it is. That hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bright and Morning Star, when we shall be altogether like Himself for ever.

Hence, those who are up there are still waiting and hoping, though in the blissful enjoyment of His presence ; because when the Lord Jesus comes in this beautiful manner to call His sleeping ones out of their graves, they then will have their resurrection bodies, and soul and body will be re-united in everlasting glory, never more to part ; but now, their bodies are in the grave, and will remain there, till that happy moment come.

Thus, Abel, and Abraham, and Job, and all the Old Testament saints as well as the New, are still waiting for this glorious day. David, speaking of it, says, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness," thus shewing that he would not be fully so till that day came. (Ps. xvii. 15.)

I am so glad we referred to this, for it is well to be fully established in these delightful truths ; because departed saints are still waiting up there for the same joyful day as that for which we are waiting down here. This gives a oneness of interest between us which is most happy. The Lord Jesus also is waiting and looking forward, with the greatest delight, to the day when He will have His beloved people with Himself in resurrection-glory.

Well, John, I am glad to know that the Lord Jesus is also waiting. This makes it so very delightful, because we are waiting with Him. This should give us patience indeed.

Yes, James, it should. And He is looking forward with greater delight than we are, to the time when we shall be with Him. This is truly delightful to think of, and even now it makes the joy of His presence to be still more joyous, and the glories of the Father's house still more glorious.

Thus the Lord Jesus is waiting, and departed saints are waiting, and we down here are waiting, for the one joyful moment—the resurrection-morning—that morning without clouds to all who believe in His name.

How well it is to see these glorious realities in the light of God's own word ! it imparts a calmness and quietness to our souls, which nothing else can give. It removes the mist from before our eyes, and thereby enables us to enter into God's thoughts about the future with joy and gladness. And this He would always have His people do. He delights in having us in communion with Himself about all His purposes. Therefore it is that He has told them out to us so simply, and so plainly, in words we can understand.

He has indeed, John ; and I think I enter into the joy of it in a way I never did before.

I am glad you do, James, and I hope it will go on more and more, because God would have it so ; for He has associated us with His beloved Son in every way, so that we shall be with Him, and like Him for ever. The Lord Jesus, when He comes, will change these vile bodies, and fashion them like unto His glorious body ; thus making us meet for His Father's presence, and His own joy and company, in such a way that we shall feel ourselves perfectly at home there, through one eternal day.

This makes the future very bright and happy for God's people, and sure and certain too ; because it is He Himself who has planned and done it all.

Therefore He would not have our hearts troubled, let things be however they may down here. Neither would He have us afraid ; because He is with us, and the work is all done and settled for ever, as sure as God's eternal throne. And He hath given unto us who believe the earnest of the Spirit, so that we may be always confident ; and never for one moment allow the least doubt or misgiving in any way whatever. (2 Cor. v. 5, 6.)

Believers should hold this truth very firmly, because the Lord Jesus has made it all so sure and certain by His own precious blood. He died and rose again, and thereby settled the question of sin for ever before God. He put it away by the sacrifice of Himself, so that all who believe are justified from all things. He is bringing us into God's presence with all the acceptability of His own Person, in a way we never could have known, had not sin entered into the world. He is making us whiter than snow before God, by His precious blood.

This is truly delightful, John ; and I hope we shall be very careful to keep our garments unspotted from the world, by avoiding every evil thing, that as He has made us so clean, we may be very careful to keep ourselves as such, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight.

I hope we shall, James, more and more ; and what joy it gives to see how beautifully He is working in these last and closing days, in reviving this long forgotten hope of His coming for His beloved people. He is sending it forth wherever they are, even to the ends of the earth, so that they may be found ready to meet Him with joy when He comes ; having their loins girded, and their lights burning. This is the only happy position for God's dear people to be in ; and it is for their good as well as His glory that they should be found thus waiting.

How pleasant it is to rise in the morning with the thought that perhaps we may see His face before the

evening, and to lay our heads on our pillows at night, feeling glad that perhaps we may hear His voice before the morning and knowing that we are ready ! Thus days and nights pass swiftly and sweetly on.

We naturally like to have some bright expectation before our minds ; it helps us very much, and what so truly happy as the thought of seeing Him ? Beside this it keeps the world at a proper distance, and at the same time preserves our hearts from that anxious, corroding care about the future, to which we are so prone.

This is a deliverance indeed, for present things are pressing on every hand, and so calculated to fill our minds with gloomy forebodings as to what will be in days to come. But the Lord Jesus would not have it so. His desire is that His people should enjoy complete rest of soul from all these things, through the hope of His coming ; knowing too, that should He tarry, His watchful eye will be ever over us for good, interested in everything that concerns us, and making every need we have His care. He would therefore have us rest in His love and not be anxious about anything, either present or future ; but be assured that He is working all things together for good to them that love God, however it may seem to the contrary.

He also will give strength according to our day, and grace according to the circumstance ; and should the darkness thicken, and the pressure increase, so also our light and joy in Him will increase and abound more and more—the path of the just that shineth brighter and brighter until the perfect day. God will supply every need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil. iv. 19.)

How exceedingly beautiful these scriptures are ; they fill our hearts with joy and gladness, for it is just the opposite to the hope of the worldling, that is getting darker and darker the further he goes on, till it will end in eternal darkness ! But to the believer in the path of obedience, there will be an increase of

light given day by day ; going on more and more till he find himself in the light of God's eternal presence, where all is unclouded glory.

This is truly happy ; and God's people will find the joy and blessedness of it, just in proportion as they have to do with the Lord Jesus, day by day in this beautiful way ; ever keeping Him before their souls as the Bright and Morning Star. Thus remembering that He may come any day or any hour in the day ; and take us to Himself for ever.

It is well to keep this before our minds, John, as you say, and I hope we shall ever do so. There is another thing respecting the morning star as a simile that is very important, and which is, that between its coming and the rising of the sun, there is a short interval, in which the darkness continues, and even increases ; so that it is the most gloomy part of the night, though the star itself is an evidence that the day is near at hand.

This is very remarkable, James, and I am glad to know it, though I have never observed it ; but I can quite understand it being so ; and it makes the figure the more simple and real ; because there will be an interval between the Lord Jesus coming for His church, and His appearing for His ancient people Israel ; and this will be a season of darkness and evil indeed ; it is bad enough now, but then it will be a great deal worse.

This time is spoken of in scripture as the time when iniquity will have come up to its highest point ; and therefore it will be the time of the greatest suffering and sorrow that ever was on the earth, or ever will be ; so that it will be very sad indeed for those who are left behind when the church is gone. (Matthew xxiv. 21.)

Then this makes it very evident, John, that believers will be removed from earth to heaven, before this time of tribulation can come in any measure.

Oh yes, James ; it will be as it was in the days of

Noah: not the least thing could take place respecting the deluge until Noah and his family were safe in the ark. So also was it in the days of Lot. No judgment could come upon guilty Sodom while he was there; and when he lingered, the two angels laid hold of his hand and dragged him out, saying "We cannot do anything till thou be come thither." How much more will it be so with God's heavenly people in days which are coming! (Gen. xix. 16, 22.)

This makes it very simple and plain as to the time of the tribulation. I am so glad we referred to it, because many of God's people are fearing and trembling as to these things, not knowing how they shall be able to endure when it comes.

Oh, John, how this shews the cruel malice of Satan; and what access he has to the minds of the people of God! His great delight is to draw them into the world; and when he cannot do that, he then seeks to frighten them with thoughts of what is coming on the earth; he is indeed an unwearied adversary, but we shall have him under our feet very shortly. (Romans xvi. 20.)

We shall, James, and even now God is turning all his wiles into blessing for His beloved people, and will do so until that happy moment come, when we shall be out of his reach for ever.

Then again as to the time of the tribulation, it is God's people who are keeping it back. The Lord Jesus speaks of them as the salt of the earth, and thus preserving it from corruption; also as the light of the world, and therefore keeping it from being one scene of darkness. This will be the case as long as they are down here, so that it cannot come to its worst till they be gone; and what is still more, the Spirit of God is down here dwelling in believers, so that till Christ come to take them home, they are little lights for Him, each one shining in the midst of the darkness, however feeble it may be. It is this which keeps the measure of peace and comfort on the earth which we enjoy. The world little know

what they owe to the people of God, though they hate and despise them.

But when the Holy Ghost is taken away, and the church too, then things will become exceeding bad. Therefore there will be nothing to hinder the Anti-christ, that man of sin, the son of perdition, from coming on the scene at once, with all his dreadful delusions. And this he will most surely do.

Then, John, you really think that this evil one will be manifested as soon as the church is gone, do you ?

Not in his true character, James ; for he will be Satan's man, and will no doubt be there ready. But he will appear at first as Satan always does, in a most subtle and deceitful manner ; even as he did to our first parents in the garden of Eden ; full of insinuations and fair promises. Then when he has gained a little ground, he will come out by degrees in his true character ; and after a time will manifest what he really is, a deceiver and an enemy, and the eyes of some will be open to see it.

Is it not truly wonderful, John, that they all do not discover what he is at once ?

No, James ; they will be deceived by his outward appearance and great pretensions. Beside this, men will be given up to this delusion, because of their unbelief. "For he will come with all power and signs, and lying wonders ; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish ; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this cause God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.)

They would not receive God's precious gospel, offering them life and salvation through His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ ; therefore they will be given over to believe a lie, even to believe in this evil one, the son of perdition ; and will with him be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. (2 Thess. i. 8, 9 ; ii. 3, 12.)

What a very solemn position, John, this puts them in, who are now rejecting the gospel of God's grace and love, so freely offered to every one without money and without price !

Indeed, it does, James. For so surely as they are doing this, so surely will they be given up to the delusion of that evil one, and will find their eternal portion with him at the last.

Do you think, John, that all the world will be deceived by this Antichrist in that day ?

Oh no, James, but they surely will who have had the truth offered to them in the love of it, and they would not have it, but loved the darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. God's word assures us that they will. But how few comparatively have ever had this simple gospel of God's love and grace offered to them ! They have had a thousand other things put before them but not the love of the truth that they might be saved.

Therefore as soon as the church is gone, God will at once begin to work by His Spirit in the hearts of those whom He hath chosen, to witness for Himself against this evil one. This will mostly be from among His ancient people Israel. And they, together with all who receive their testimony, will pass through very great persecution and tribulation on account of it. For he will cause all to be put to death that will not bow down and worship him ; so they are told by the Lord Jesus to flee to the mountains or wherever they can, and hide themselves from his destroying sword. (Isaiah xxvi. 20 ; Matthew xxiv. ; Rev. xiii.)

Do you think that many of the Jews will really believe in him, John ? God's ancient people Israel ?

Yes, James, scripture shews us very plainly that it will be so. And more than this, they will receive him with joy and gladness as their own true Messiah, the one whom they have been looking for so long. (Dan. ix. 27.) Therefore they will give him a place in the temple, where he will be as the object of worship.

sitting as God, shewing himself to be God. (2 Thess. ii. 3-5.) They rejected the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to them in His Father's name, with His hands full of blessing for them. And now they will be so deceived as to receive this evil one which will come in His own name for their destruction. (John v. 43.)

This is very sad indeed, John, to see God's ancient people given up to such a delusion as this. But as you say, it will be because they rejected and crucified their own true Messiah, the Lord of glory.

It will, James. And sad things will follow, even among themselves, for it will cause such bitter feelings of anger and hatred in those who receive him, against those who will not, that there never was the like from the beginning of the world, no, nor ever will be. (Matt. xxiv. 21.) The brother will betray the brother to death ; and the father the son. And children will rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death, if they will not worship this Antichrist ; so bitter and so cruel will their hatred be, that every natural tie will be broken. (Mark xiii. 12, 13.)

Well, John, this will indeed be dreadful. Bad and cruel as persecution has been in Christendom, there has never been anything equal to this, that every feeling of these most endearing relationships should be gone. Fathers have been known to die for their children, and children for their parents, rather than betray each other ; but for fathers to cause their children to be put to death, and children their parents, I do not remember one case of the kind recorded in history.

No, James, neither do I ; but so will it be in the religious contention respecting the Antichrist in days which are coming. It will be the time of Jacob's trouble, but he will be delivered out of it, and everlasting blessing will follow. (Jeremiah xxx. 7.)

When God chose Abraham and his posterity at the first, it was that they should be a witness for Himself

in the earth, when everything had gone wrong. But in this they failed. Time after time they turned aside, and were as bad as, or worse than, the nations around them ; till at last God sent to them His beloved Son ; and Him they rejected and crucified. (Luke xix. 9-15.) Therefore God cast them off, but not for ever. He will take them up again with much mercy, though it will be in great judgment upon the ungodly among them, who will be banished from His presence into eternal perdition. But they who are faithful He will establish in their own land, and bless them abundantly with an everlasting blessing. (Isaiah liv. 7, 8 ; Jer. xxxi. 10-12.)

But as we have seen, brighter days will follow, John.

Yes, James, days of blessing such as they have never known. God will not only bless them, but He will make them channels of blessing to the whole earth. Men will call them the holy people ; the redeemed of the Lord ; and He will be glorified in them. (Isaiah xlvi. 13.)

This gives a brightness to their future history which nothing else could give, thus, knowing that they will yet be to His praise and glory in a way they never have been in days which are past. For their whole history as a nation has been failure upon failure, and neglect of God.

But though they have been so rebellious as a people ; and at this present time are scattered abroad upon the face of the earth on account of it, and their beautiful temple destroyed ; and their beloved city and land in the hands of their enemies, as God said it should be if they were disobedient ; yet He will restore it to them, and bring them back again ! and even now, there are many things going on, and have been for some time, which shew very plainly that the day is drawing near.

It gives me real joy, John, to hear you say so ; both for their sake, and ours too. Because we know that if there is the least evidence whatever that the day is about to dawn for them, then the Bright and Morning

Star must soon appear for us as we have been seeing. Therefore our pilgrim days are very few. It also shews forth in such a beautiful way God's unchanging love. Though He must chasten and correct for sin, yet His loving kindness remains the same. It is like Himself, it is unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. (James i. 17.)

This is most delightfully true, James, in every way. Whether it be of believers individually, or God's church as a whole, or of His ancient people Israel, as a nation, His purposes are unalterable ; and He will make everything work together for their good, and His own glory. But the unbeliever shuts himself away from God as far as he possibly can ; he will not have anything to do with God, and therefore shuts himself out of this beautiful circle of blessing altogether, both for time and eternity.

I see this very plainly, John, and am glad, that He, in His great goodness, has brought me into this everlasting stream of mercy and love, and made me drink of this water of life ; though I ill-deserved it, and am so unworthy of it still. But it is all of Himself ; and He shall have all the praise, and all the glory for ever and ever. And you really do think, John, that the time is drawing near for God's earthly people to return to their own land again, do you ?

Yes, James, I do ; there are so many things taking place respecting it ; and they themselves are most anxious for it, and doing all they can to bring it about. But it is sad to think that they will return to their beloved city, in unbelief, and will not receive the precious gospel. Therefore one of the very first things they will do, will be to build their temple again, and perform the services of it as far as they possibly can, the same as they did in days of old. And it is in this temple that the man of sin will gain such an exalted place, that he will even sit as God, shewing himself to be God, and claiming the honour of being the alone object of worship. And it is there that he will

meet his destruction, together with all them that are with him. (2 Thess. ii. 4-10.)

John, this brings out a thing that I never could understand before, which was, where this man of sin would sit as the object of worship ; seeing that the temple is destroyed, and the mosque of Omar is now standing in its place. But now I can see that the Jews will be in their own land again, and have their temple builded before he comes.

Yes, James, they will, or at least before he goes off the scene again ; but not necessarily before he comes. It may be built or finished while he is there. This would not take long about, for they will be so very earnest in it, and filled with such religious zeal and delight, that they will most likely work night and day till it be finished.

But alas, it will be without the true knowledge of God, or of His Son Jesus Christ, notwithstanding their devotedness. This is most painfully sad, because they will have no real stay for their souls, therefore will soon become an easy prey for that wicked one, with all his deceivableness of unrighteousness, and he will make the very best use of it he possibly can, and will soon have them involved in his dreadful snare.

But it is not the Jews only who will be deceived, but many Gentiles also will be thus deluded by him, so as to own him as the only Lord God. Therefore the judgments will be very great when the Lord Jesus comes to the earth in glory, because this iniquity must be put down before He can set up His peaceful kingdom and reign.

I suppose, John, it will be the wonderful things which the Antichrist will be able to do, which will be the great means by which he deceives the people ?

No doubt but it will, James, because he will have power to call down fire from heaven in the sight of men. And this, in their eyes, will be such an evidence that what he says is true, that he will carry captive their hearts and minds, like an overflowing stream,

and will very easily get them to do whatever he desires. (Rev. xiii.)

Then there will be the false prophet who will work miracles ; thus they will unite in this work of deception ; and will be one in everything, so that what the one says the other does ; and thus things will go on till in the end they will both be cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever. (Rev. xix. 20.)

But it will be by the power of Satan that this impostor will be able to do these amazing things, John, will it not ?

Of course it will, James ; and they that have given themselves up to him will not be able to resist this power, but will be hurried along by it, to do the most desperate things ; even to kill every one that will not receive his mark either in their foreheads, or in their right hands, as an evidence of submission to him in everything, especially in worship.

Such will be the dreadful darkness, between the coming of the Lord Jesus as the Bright and Morning Star and His appearing as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings, that men will be so deluded by the god of this world, that they will lose all power over themselves, and will delight to do His bidding in everything, even to put to death the nearest and dearest to them, if they will not bow down and worship his image ; so completely will they be carried away by this current of iniquity, and the spirit of idolatry. (Mark xiii. 12 ; Rev. xiii. 13-17.)

It is also during this time that Satan will be cast down to the earth, and his angels with him. Therefore he will be full of wrath, because he will know that he hath but a short time to stay, and he will make the very best use of it he possibly can against God, and against His people. (Rev. xii. 9-12.)

This is the time I suppose, John, when God's judgments will be poured out upon the earth, which we read of in the book of the Revelation ?

It is, James ; and very fearful it will be. Men will

gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven, so great will be their rage and anger against God, because of their pains and their sores ; yet they will not give in nor repent of their deeds. (Rev. xvi. 10, 11.)

Do you not think there will be a great deal of wilfulness in it, John ? It will not be all deception with them, I think.

I believe you have spoken the truth, James. They will have given themselves over to the Antichrist, and they will be determined to stand by him, let the consequence be what it may. Their rebellion will be as the sin of witchcraft, and their stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry. And though this impostor will be able to do so many things by Satanic power, yet he will not be able to stay their plagues, or heal their diseases.

Hence they will be filled with the greatest rage and despair, but not humbled ; neither will they yield, notwithstanding the dreadful state they are in ; but the greater their torments, the greater will be their feelings of hatred and revenge against God and His people. Thus they will go on from bad to worse, and in the end will find that it is hard for them to kick against the pricks.

Ah, John, this is true also of those that are doing it to-day. Saul of Tarsus knew what an evil and bitter thing it was, and so has every one that has done the same thing in all ages.

Yes, James, they have ; and sad indeed it is that any should be found so wilful, for it will be an eternal question with them if they do not repent.

But it will not be the Antichrist and his followers only, that will be against God and His people ; there will be many enemies in that day, especially against Israel as a nation. But it will be all to no purpose. God will triumph, and His people will be free, and safely established in their own land more firmly than they ever were.

This is always the case, John. God will bring about His own glorious purposes, let men do what they may against Him. Their rage will be all fruitless and vain.

What true rest this gives the people of God ! They can afford to be quiet, and let Him work, when they are in the enjoyment of this delightful truth. But though quiet, yet waiting, ready to do any little thing He may give them to do till He come.

But who do you think the enemies of Israel will mostly be in that day, John ?

Well, James, there is what is called in scripture, the Assyrian, the king of the North, who will do great things against them, also the king of the South, and others. This, however, we cannot enter into at present. But there is a neighbouring kingdom, which even now has a very jealous eye upon Palestine, God's land ; and they are doing all they can to get it, but they never will. Some time back they made a very great effort to take it ; but God sent two other powers against them, to keep them from their purpose ; so that it might be reserved for His ancient people Israel. And at the proper time these will have it, let men do what they may. And when they are in the land, this same power will come up against them, and try again to get it, but they will not be able to do so. God will fight for His people, and their enemies will perish upon the mountains of Israel. (Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.)

Thus it will be, John, with all who fight against God. And I should like to ask when it is that the two witnesses will prophesy ? It will be during the time of this man of sin ; will it not ?

Yes, James, it will. And their testimony will mostly be against him, and those that are with him ; because of their wicked proceedings. But the only effect it will have will be to bring out their wickedness more and more, and harden their hearts against God. (Rev. xi. 3-13.)

This again, John, is how it always has been, when

men are set upon their iniquity ; they will go on, let the result be what it may !

It is so, James ; man as man has always been against God, but still it will come out in such a dreadful and determined manner at this time. For though these two prophets will have power to execute judgment upon their enemies ; and to shut heaven that it rain not during the days of their prophecy, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will ; yet they will not be heeded ; but the anger and wickedness of this man of sin and his followers, will get worse and worse.

Thus things will continue till these two witnesses have fulfilled their mission ; and then this wicked one will be allowed to prevail against them, and slay them. And the delight of their enemies will be so great, that they will not allow their dead bodies to be put in graves ; but will have them lying publicly in the streets of Jerusalem, so that they may be able to pour all the contempt and malice upon them they possibly can, and thus satisfy their revenge to the full. (Rev. xi.)

A poor satisfaction this, John, and of short duration too !

Indeed it will, James. Yet poor as it is, this is all they will get. And it will give them the greatest joy and delight for a time, so that they will send gifts of rejoicing the one to the other, that they might make merry and be glad, because they have succeeded in killing these two prophets which tormented them.

Thus while they are in the very height of their enjoyment and triumph, pouring all the contempt and reproach upon their dead bodies they possibly can, then all of a sudden, they will stand upon their feet ; and a great voice will be heard from heaven, saying, "Come up hither," and they will immediately ascend in a cloud, and their enemies will behold them.

Well, John, one would think that this must really open their eyes to see what they are doing and turn them from their wicked ways.

Yes, James, you would think so ; and we are told that it will alarm them for the moment but it will have no lasting effect, so as to humble them, or stay their downward course : but they will still go on, adding iniquity to iniquity till their cup be full.

This need not surprise us, however, for we see the same thing took place at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The soldiers were alarmed and became as dead, when they saw the angels ; and yet only a few hours after this, they could hold out their hands, and receive money as a bribe, to say "His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." (Matt. xxviii. 12-15.) Then again these very men who will see the two witnesses ascend, will have been already a witness to a similar thing in the ascension of the heavenly saints. For though they will not actually see them go, yet they will know they are gone. Not only because they are gone ; but because their clothing will be left, all fastened together the same as it was when it was upon them—not taken off, but left empty. And there could not be a greater evidence than this of what had taken place. It was this that proved to the disciples that the Lord Jesus had risen. The women who were early at the sepulchre, told them that they had seen Him. This, however, was not enough, they could not believe it. But when they saw the grave clothes lie in this empty state, like a chrysalis, this was so convincing, that they doubted no more. (John xx. 7, 8.)

This same thing also will be seen when the heavenly saints are taken to be with the Lord. And these same men will, no doubt, have beheld empty clothes there, and most likely were a little alarmed for the time, but it soon wore off, and they will have returned to their daily calling again as usual ; and will be going on building, and planting, marrying, and giving in marriage just as they are doing to-day, as though nothing had occurred. Therefore we need not be surprised, that when they see these two witnesses ascend up to

heaven it will have no lasting effect upon them, in staying their evil proceedings. (Luke xvii. 26-29.)

No, John, we need not ; for poor man can do any evil when left to himself. And if I were there, no doubt I should be as bad as any of them, and perhaps the very worst among them !

It is well to remember this, James, it keeps us humble and dependent. And this is truly our safe, and only happy place ; and I hope we shall know the blessedness of it, more and more.

Then again there will be the everlasting gospel sent forth about this time, "Saying, fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come, and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Do you think this refers to the man of sin, John ?

Yes, James ; in a most simple and remarkable way, by calling on men to worship God who made the heavens, and the earth, and all things that are therein ; and not to allow themselves to be deceived by that wicked Antichrist which is in the temple at Jerusalem, pretending to be what he is not. He claims the place of worship and adoration, yet cannot deliver himself or his followers from the plagues that are going on.

Thus God's servants will go forth with this everlasting gospel, far and wide ; warning men everywhere, and saying, Do not have to do with that evil one which is at Jerusalem : he is an impostor. Do not worship him, whatever his seeming power and pretensions may be. For the hour of his judgment is come, and you will be partakers of it if you are found associated with him. Worship God who made the heavens, and the earth, and the seas, and the fountains of water, for He alone is worthy.

Thus we see how very different this everlasting gospel will be from the gospel of the grace of God which He is sending forth to-day, which tells us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved. Though of course to fear God and give glory

to Him now, would be to receive His beloved Son, and with Him we have life and salvation, but then it will be very different. Men will be called upon to worship Him as Creator. Yet all lovely and beautiful ; according to the circumstances in which it is given ; and also according to what God is doing. Now He is gathering a bride for His beloved Son : but then He will be preserving men for earthly millennial blessing. But all according to His eternal purpose, and suitable to His own goodness and love.

I think, John, I see this more clearly than ever I did ; and am glad I do so. And how truly happy it will be for those who are faithful to God in the midst of it all !

Indeed it will, James ; for they will have the present and eternal joy of it. And many of them will flee into the countries around, and wherever they can testify for God against this impostor, in a most powerful way, and will cause the greatest commotion, and persecution wherever they go. But it will be accompanied with the richest blessing. For many will receive their testimony with the greatest delight and joy : out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues. A multitude which no man can number will turn from this wicked one, and wash their robes from it all, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. vii. 9-14.)

Oh well, John, this will be encouraging to them in the midst of their sorrow, thus to see that their labours are not in vain in the Lord.

Yes, James, God always has blessing in everything for His beloved people ; and our happiness is to know it, and He has told us of these things that are coming ; so that we might have fellowship with Him in His purposes about them, as His dear children.

But, John, the sufferings of those who are faithful to the Lord, will be very great in those days, will they not ?

They will indeed, James, they will not know what.

to do, or which way to go. For they will be hated of all men for His name's sake, and turned against in the fiercest manner possible by those who still cleave to this impostor (the man of sin), so that they will be driven about from place to place, like partridges upon the mountains, by their cruel pursuers. And some of them will they cast into prison, and many will they cause to be put to death. And their souls will cry for vengeance up there in heaven under the altar, and will say, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" and white robes will be given to every one of them. And they will be told to rest yet a little season, till their brethren should be killed as they were. (Rev. vi. 10, 11.)

This cry for vengeance, John, would not be right for us now. Stephen, as they were stoning him to death, kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts vii. 59, 60.) Ours, like his, should be the prayer of forgiveness.

Yes, James, it should. This is now the breathing of every newborn soul during this dispensation, but it will be very different then. But theirs will be quite right, and proper for them, even as ours is for us now. Therefore they will get their cry answered in its proper time. First, in the destruction of the man of sin and his followers, who had cruelly killed them. Then, after that, their bodies will be raised to reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. xx. 4.)

Thus when this dreadful rebellion is put down, then the Lord Jesus as king will call those nations before Him, where His servants had been, with the everlasting gospel, warning them against that evil one in the temple at Jerusalem. And the Lord Jesus will judge those nations, according to the way they have behaved toward His servants whom He thus sent to them. This He will do as king over all the earth : not as the Lord Almighty. And He will set the sheep on His

right hand, and the goats will be on His left. (Matt. xxv. 31-46.) "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and to those on His left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

Thus the question will not be as to whether they have believed in Him or not, which is the question of blessing and salvation now. But it will be, as to whether they have been kind or unkind to His servants whom He sent to them; these poor despised and persecuted ones whom He now calls His brethren; and whom they in their anger have treated so cruelly. And He tells them that what they did to them, they did to Him. And the one He will send away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

Their love or hatred to Him had been shewn in their dealings toward His people, and now He will deal with them in this solemn, yet on the other hand, beautiful manner. The Lord Jesus could not allow those to enjoy His peaceful kingdom and reign, who had thus shewn themselves so bitterly opposed to Him, and to everything that is holy and true.

This judgment, John, is what I was taught in early days to look at as the judgment before the great white throne, at the last day, which we read of in the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation. And I was told that we could not tell whether we should be among the sheep, or the goats, till we get there.

Yes, James, and so was I too; and I used to read this scripture and tremble, because I did not know whether I should be on His right or on His left. But you see it is not resurrection at all. The dead are

not mentioned in the scene, because they are not there. But it is the nations who are alive on the earth when the Lord Jesus comes to set up His millennial kingdom and reign as King over all the earth, and then every knee will bow to Him.

I see this very plainly now, John, and have for some time. And very glad I am that I do ; for it is painful to think that the righteous and the wicked will all stand together at one judgment seat, and not know whether they will be saved or lost till they get there. Such thoughts are quite foreign to scripture in every way.

Our souls are saved the very moment we receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and God would have us know the peace and joy of it at once. And be assured that we cannot come into condemnation, but are passed from death unto life. (John v. 24.) The sinner thus saved can forget himself and think of Him who saved him, can seek to please Him too in everything, and not be filled with doubts and fears, and gloomy forebodings, which never honour God, but quite the contrary, they dishonour Him very much. They are from beneath, and not from above.

Then there is God's judgment on Babylon, John, I think that takes place during this time of tribulation ; before the Lord Jesus takes to Himself His great power and reigns.

Yes, James, and sad indeed it will be. Babylon is corrupt Christianity, that which is now so abroad in the earth, making merchandise of mankind. This scarlet woman, professing to be the bride of Christ ; yet full of iniquity and every evil thing. And instead of mourning an absent Lord, she is living in all the luxury of the world, and decked with every costliness the earth can produce. But her end will come, and the smoke of her torment will rise up for ever and ever. (Rev. xviii., xix.)

I can well enter into this, John : God is forming a bride for Christ ; therefore Satan must have a counter-

feit. But when the marriage of the Lamb is come : then this false bride, this woman clothed in scarlet, will be put down with the greatest indignation, and all heaven will rejoice at her downfall. (Rev. xix. 1-3.)

They will, James ; and the man of sin also will be glad : little thinking that his own end is so near too. But during the short time he is allowed to stay, her power will fall into his hands ; which will, if possible, still increase his pride and self exaltation. (Rev. xvii. 16, 17.) This scarlet woman was a little kind of rival with him for some time ; but now she is gone, he will think that he shall have it all his own way. And things will go on most prosperously to his heart's content.

The two witnesses also are gone, and the preachers of the everlasting gospel are put down. Some are killed, and some are driven far away to hide themselves in the wilderness, or mountains, or wherever they can, from their cruel pursuers. And now this scarlet woman also is destroyed, and her power given into his hands. Therefore he and they that are with him, will be exulting in their success, with the greatest demonstration of joy and gladness, persuading themselves that every enemy is gone, and every difficulty is over. Thus they will be saying, " Peace and safety," and then when they are least expecting it, " sudden destruction will come upon them." (1 Thess. v. 2, 3.)

I see this, John. It will be one scene of prosperity and triumph, in rebellion against God, till their iniquity be got up to its very height. And then their everlasting destruction will come all of a moment, and nothing will stay it.

Yes, James ; it will be like the "lightning that cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so also will the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. xxiv. 27.)

The Lord Jesus will appear in this dark scene as the sun—the Sun of righteousness with healing in His

wings—for His poor despised and trodden down people ; but as a flaming fire to His enemies. This man of sin He will consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming ; and all who have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, but have received him, will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. (2 Thess. i. 7-10 ; ii. 3-12 ; Jude 14, 15.)

This will be a change indeed, for both parties, John ; and I suppose this is what that scripture refers to in the book of Isaiah, where it says, “Lo this is our God ; we have waited for him ; He will save us. This is the Lord ; we have waited for him ; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” (Isa. xxv. 9.) These will have the Lord on their side ; while the others will have the impostor.

There is no doubt of it, James, whatever ; though of course that beautiful scripture has been a comfort to God’s people in all ages, and is so to-day. But it will apply very especially to those poor persecuted ones in days which are coming, because their persecutors will be bowing down to their god, the man of sin. Or perhaps, being at a distance from Jerusalem, they will have his image. Hence, when the Lord Jesus comes, those who are faithful to Him will welcome Him in this joyful manner as their Saviour and Deliverer, while their enemies will see how terribly they have been deluded, and will be confounded. Therefore the one “will sing for joy of heart ;” but the other will cry for sorrow of heart, and “howl for vexation of spirit.” (Isa. lxv. 14, 15.)

This we can quite understand ; for well they might howl, to find themselves thus deceived in such a dreadful manner, by this evil one who is now sent to his own place, the lake of fire ; and they have nothing left but his image—perhaps a block of wood or stone, shaped into his likeness. Or it may be of silver or

gold, which they have made, each one for himself to worship. But with shame and confusion they will now cast them to the moles and the bats, while they themselves will go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the rugged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and from the glory of His majesty ; when He riseth to shake terribly the earth. (Isa. ii. 7-22.) But they will not be allowed to remain there long, for they will soon be brought forth again to the judgment of the twenty-fifth of Matthew. Oh, how sad will be their confusion, thus to find themselves in such a dreadful position !

Ah, sad indeed, John. But they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Had they delighted in the light, they would soon have discovered the woful character of this man of darkness, and would not have been thus deceived by him to their eternal destruction.

Just so, James. And it has always been the same in all ages, and it is so now. Men delight in iniquity, and they do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, but there is no salvation apart from Him. Therefore if they will go on in sin against God, they will find that their end will be destruction ; the same as those who will be deluded by this wicked one in the day which is coming.

Thus the scene will be changed in an instant. God's people will be delivered, and the man of sin and his followers will be put down. The beast and false prophet will be cast at once into the lake of fire and brimstone, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark ix. 43-48 ; Rev. xix. 20.)

Then the Lord Jesus will take the throne of His father David, and go on putting down every opposing power, till all His enemies be under His feet. (Luke i. 32, 33 ; 1 Cor. xv. 25.)

Satan also, that great enemy of God and man, the one that has been the great cause of all the evil that has been in the world from the time that man was created upon the earth, will be bound with a great

chain, and cast into the bottomless pit, and a seal set upon him to secure him there for a thousand years. (Rev. xx. 1, 2.)

This will be a day of real triumph indeed, John, for this poor world ; thus to get rid of that great adversary that has been the certain cause of all its woes.

Truly it will, James. And it will not be that Satan is bound only. But the Prince of peace will reign, the King of glory ; and all creation will know the joy and blessedness of it. The elders and the heavenly hosts will see it, and give thanks unto God. They will have known the dreadful evils and suffering which have been going on so long, through that evil one having such power over the minds of men ; and now they will rejoice that the scene has so entirely changed. They will behold, with delight and thankfulness, the joy and harmony which will be on the earth. (Rev. xi. 17 ; xix. 6.)

This we can well understand, because the heavenly hosts have always been interested in man. We see how angels rejoiced and praised God, when the Saviour was born ; and we hear of joy in heaven over one sinner that repented : and now, when this time of rest and peace comes for the whole creation, they are filled with the greatest gladness. We see also, how pleased they have been from the beginning to visit the earth with messages of mercy and love for man.

So that at this time of blessing it will be all joy. Joy in heaven, joy on earth, and joy everywhere but in the abode of the lost. Every nation in the world will submit themselves to the Lord Jesus as their King, and He will reign over all the earth ; and before His ancients gloriously. (Isa. xxiv. 23 ; Zech. xiv. 9.) And the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. xi. 9.) Thus He will reign whose right it is, and all the world will see His glory. (Ezek. xxi. 25-27.)

But you do not think, John, that the Lord Jesus will dwell on the earth, do you ?

No, James, I do not. He will visit the earth ; and we read that His feet will again stand on the Mount of Olives : but His own proper abode will be the heavenly Jerusalem, which will in that day descend into the air, and will most likely be situated over the earthly Jerusalem : the one will be for the earthly saints, and the other for the heavenly, where the Lord Himself will dwell. (Isa. xi. ; Rev. xxi. 10, 27.)

We read also, that the city will have no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it : for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And His glory will shine out from it to all the earth ; so that the nations will walk in the light of it. (Rev. xxi. 22, 23.) And of the earthly Jerusalem we read, “ Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee ; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.” (Isa. ix.)

These will be happy days, John ; it seems to me that they will be days of heaven upon earth.

Well, James, they will be in measure. And even the poor brute creation will have their happy part in it also. They will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Rom. viii. 20, 21, 23.) The wolf and the lamb will dwell together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox ; and dust will be the serpent’s meat ; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord. (Isa. lxv. 25.)

The nations also will dwell together in peace and unity, and will go up to Jerusalem from year to year,

to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. So glorious will it be in that day, that even the bells on the horses in Jerusalem will be "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." Zech. xiv. 16-21.

Thus everything on earth will be very lovely ; and we as heavenly saints will be able to enter into the joy and blessedness of it all, though our place and portion will be so far above it, happy as it will be. Ours will be up there in the glory ; yet we shall be fully interested in all that is going on down here with God's earthly people ; and we shall have the greatest joy and delight in them, and all that concerns them, as reigning with Christ over the earth.

But it is important to remember that this earthly blessing is for God's millennial saints—His earthly people Israel. But we are His heavenly people, "Blest with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Our portion is heavenly, altogether heavenly ; and our eternal home is the Father's house.

What will be the kind of blessing, John, for those who will be saved by the preaching of the everlasting gospel ? Will not theirs be heavenly ?

No, James ; it will be this earthly millennial blessing. The time for obtaining heavenly glory will be over ; as the bride will be complete and taken to heaven. Therefore those who believe and fear God then will have a very especial place in the millennial glory ; and the Lord Jesus will delight in taking the greatest care of them. (Rev. vii. 16, 17.) Then after the millennial reign is over, they will possess the new earth in the eternal state, except it be those who shall die during the tribulation. They will get their resurrection body when the Lord Jesus comes to set up His kingdom ; and they will reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. xx. 4.)

Therefore it will be a privilege for God's people to die during that time of trial ; either a natural death, or by the sword of the Antichrist, because they would not receive his mark. Hence we read, "Blessed are

the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth ; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labour, and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13.) It will be trying for them to be put to death ; but by it their time of trial will be over, and they will get the reward of their faithfulness, by being raised from the dead at the end of the tribulation, to reign with Christ in His millennial kingdom.

Then John, that scripture, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," does not apply to God's people who die now ?

No, James, properly speaking it does not. Though, of course, to die in the Lord has always been truly blessed in all ages, and it is so now ; but then it will be especially so ; for they will get a better portion when He comes to reign, than even those that have passed victoriously through this time of trial, because they will have their bodies raised in glory, and will reign with Christ during the millennium ; whereas those who do not die will be God's saints on earth, and their blessing will be earthly. Very beautiful and lovely, but still earthly.

Then, John, those saved Gentiles as well as the Jews will be God's people in the millennial day, will they not ?

Yes, James, to be sure they will : for we read of a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, and people, and tongues standing before the throne clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands. These are saved Gentiles, and they have, as people say, weathered the storm ; and are come out of the great tribulation faithful to God ; and have not given in to the Antichrist or his followers in these evil days. And there they will be as victors, standing with palms in their hands, and clothed in white raiment. (Rev. vii. 9.)

The storm of persecution had been very severe, as we have seen. They were driven from among men. And the sun had scorched them by day and the frost

by night ; and they had to endure great privations in hunger, and thirst, and weariness. But now it is all over, they will never know what it is any more, for the Lamb which sitteth on the throne shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (Rev. vii. 14-17.)

Why, John, this is mostly looked at as our portion when we have done with this scene of suffering and sorrow.

I know it is, James, and I myself did so at one time with the greatest delight ; and I thought how very lovely it was. And so it is lovely, for it is of God, and it will be for ever, too ; for these millennial saints will possess the new earth in the eternal state which we read of in the twenty-first chapter of the book of the Revelation. The same language is used, alike in both cases, to describe their blessing ; but language quite unfit for heaven, or heavenly things. (Rev. xii. 4.)

How could you speak of not hungering or thirsting any more in heaven, when such things were never known there at all ? And then the sun is not to smite them, nor any heat ; shewing that the sun is still over their heads, but they are to be protected from it. Then again their tears are to be wiped away. But there are no tears in heaven, nor ever were : tears are always connected with earth. And then in the new earth there will be no more death. This language would be quite unfit for heaven, for death was never there, or ever will be. Death belongs to earth alone.

But, John, they are to be before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. This seems to me that it must be heaven.

No, James, not necessarily so, for God will have His throne in Jerusalem, and the Lord Jesus will reign as King, in the room of His father David. (Isa. ix. 6, 7 ; Jer. iii. 17 ; Luke i. 32, 33.) This will be as Son of man ; for He is truly Son of man, as well as Son of God. And there these saved Gentiles, as well as Jews, will be before His throne in everlasting blessing.

At this time also, God will have His millennial temple built, which we find so minutely described by the prophet Ezekiel. And this ransomed multitude will worship and serve Him with great delight throughout the whole of the millennial day. Then after that they are seen in the new earth, with God in their midst, and they are in the enjoyment of His presence to all eternity. The former things will have passed away.

What, John, and they will never die at all ?

No, James, they will never die at all ; this is very evident ; but they will be preserved from the judgment which will come upon the ungodly when the earth is burned up ; and their bodies will be changed and made suitable for that eternal state ; and they will be taken from the millennium into it without seeing death, and still to be God's earthly people, inhabiting the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Then God will dwell among them, having His tabernacle with men. Thus He will have the delight which He looked forward to before this world was. For they are still spoken of as men, not angels, or glorified saints, but men. (Prov. viii. 22-31.)

Well, John, this seems to exceed it all in loveliness, it is so beautiful.

No, James, I could not quite say that, blessed as it is. Because they will never form a part of that beautiful bride, the church ; and her position must be far more glorious and lovely, too, than theirs ; because she will be associated with the Lamb in every way, and in everything. She will be His joy and delight for evermore. This must be much higher, and far more glorious than to be God's earthly saints ; blessed and glorious as their portion will be.

Of course, John, come to look at it, it must be so. But it seems to me so truly blessed to have God dwelling among them ; and sin and death, and suffering and sorrow, for ever gone ; and never to know what a groan or sigh is any more.

It will be unspeakably blessed, James, as you say ; but ours will be far greater. We shall be with Christ in glory, and shall reign with Him for ever and ever. And during the millennium we shall, no doubt, come down to the earth, and see to the affairs of the millennial kingdom ; and thereby enter into the joy of it all, with the greatest delight, as reigning over the earth : but our own happy portion will be the joy of the Father's house, with Christ for ever. (John xiv. 2, 3.)

What ! we come down here, John, in our glorified bodies ? We should be altogether unfit for the associations of earth. They would not be able to look upon us. You see how it was with Moses even, when he came down from the mount. And he had only been in the Lord's presence a very short time ; yet his face so shone that the children of Israel could not look upon him. How very much more will it be so with God's heavenly saints, when their vile body is changed, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ ! (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

This is very true, James ; but Moses put a veil over his face, and so came down. And what is still nearer to us, the Lord Jesus Himself in the mount of transfiguration was seen by the three disciples, as in His kingdom and glory. And His face shone as the sun : and His raiment was white as the light. But He veiled Himself when He came down from the mount, so that He was only seen as a man among men. (Matt. xvii. 1, 2.)

We see also in Old Testament times, that the inhabitants of heaven often visited the earth. The three men who came to Abraham as he sat at his tent door in the heat of the day, and for whom he prepared a calf tender and good. Then after they had eaten, two of them proved to be angels, and the other the Lord Himself. (Gen. xviii.) How much more might such visits be made in these millennial days which are coming !

Thank you, John, very much indeed. This makes it very simple and very homely too ; so that there will be no hindrance in this way whatever to our coming down and feeling ourselves quite free, till that which we came for is over, and then retiring again to our own heavenly circle and joy.

Exactly so, James. And how exceeding lovely and beautiful it will be, and how well for us to keep this glorious future ever before our souls ! it helps to wean us from present things. Knowing too, that it is all so sure and certain to those who believe, because it has been purchased for us by the precious blood of God's own dear Son. And therefore nothing could be more sure.

God knew so well what we needed ; for if it were not certain, our hearts would sink within us, and we should have no lasting joy. But now believers can forget themselves, and think of Him who did it all for them ; and thank and praise Him too, and seek His glory in everything they do.

How happy also it will be for God's earthly people Israel, when the Lord Jesus reigns, thus to be brought so nigh unto Him ! He will not only bless them, but He will make them channels of blessing to the whole earth ; and not leave one of them buried among the nations as they now are. But He will send and gather them out of the countries, and bring them upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and on swift beasts, to His holy mountain Jerusalem. And the nations of the earth will count it the greatest honour in those days to be able to bring one of them back as an offering to the Lord. (Isa. lxvi. 19, 20.)

Thus they will return to Zion with singing, and with everlasting joy upon their heads. They will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. (Isa. li. 11.)

But John, how will it be with the wicked among them ; will the evil and the good be brought back alike ?

No, James, God will meet them on their way, and purge the rebels out from among them, and will not allow them to enter the land of Israel. (Ezek. xx. 34-38.) There will come out of Zion a Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. (Rom. xi. 26.) Thus all Israel will be saved, and what joy it gives to see the Lord Jesus thus delighting in blessing His earthly people Israel ! though they rejected Him when He was down here in weakness and sorrow ; when He came to them as their King sitting upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. But now they will receive Him with joy and gladness as their Saviour and Lord : and He will take His rightful place over them as Son of David, their king, and reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His ancients gloriously. (Isa. xxiv. 23.) This is just like Himself, and well we know it. He delighteth in mercy ; for He has taken us up from the state of ruin and sin in which we were by nature, and brought us into fellowship with Himself in it all, so that we shall be there in the full enjoyment of His company for evermore. And whatever gives Him glory will give us joy.

This is true even now, John ; and His glory is connected with our blessing, and salvation, as well as the blessing of His earthly people Israel, and the world : and this makes it so very happy thus to see Him glorified in it all, as well as we being partakers of the everlasting benefit of it ; so that we shall have the blessing, and God will have the praise and glory for ever and ever.

What joy also it gives to know that in the millennium the curse, to a great extent, will be removed from off the earth, so that it will abundantly yield its increase ; and the desert will bloom as the rose : it will blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy, and singing.

Yes, James and more than this ; scripture also shews us that death will not be allowed to prey upon man as it is now doing on every hand. But then

will be known only as the result of wilful sin, and rebellion against God. (Isa. lxv. 20 ; Zech. xiv.) But wherever sin appears, death will be the certain wages of it (Psa. ci. ; Rom. vi. 23) ; the same as it was with Adam in the garden, only he brought death on all his posterity as well ; but then every man will die for his own iniquity.

I think I see this very plainly, John ; hence men will not delight in death as they are now doing. Therefore they will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation will not rise up against nation, neither will they learn war any more. (Isa. ii. 4.) Thus all creation will know and enjoy the happy reign of the Prince of peace, the Lord of life and glory.

This, John, I think, will continue in all its blessedness for a thousand years ; all the time that Satan is bound ?

Yes, James, scripture shews us this in the most simple way. But alas for poor man ! at his best estate he is altogether vanity. And there in this blessed position he will shew himself to be the same weak helpless creature he ever was. And though sin will not make its appearance as it does now, because if it does it will be cut off ; yet the evil that was left in the earth will be secretly and sedulously working under the surface, and men will not be able to resist it, though they will have every temporal advantage possible. Yet still it will go on, like the leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. (Matt. xiii. 33.) This has always been the character of evil, and it will be so then.

This will bring a sad blight upon that fair and beautiful scene which we could wish that it might last for ever. But still as yet it is only earth ; and that not even purified, blessed as it will be. And it all shews what a dreadful thing sin is, that the earth must be really burnt up to get rid of it. What a very

humbling picture it also gives of poor man that in every circumstance he is the same, there is no help in him in any way whatever ; that man as man has no strength. Without Christ he is powerless ; let his advantages be what they may.

Therefore when Satan is let loose out of his prison, and goes forth to deceive the nations again, he finds them ready to yield themselves up to him in every way ; notwithstanding all that they have seen and heard, and all the blessings that they have enjoyed. Yet there they are, with open arms ready to receive their great adversary again, and glad to follow him in this last, great, and dreadful act of wickedness ; even to go up, and fight against Jerusalem, the camp of God's saints and the beloved city. This fills up the cup of their iniquity to the overflowing, and fire comes down from God out of heaven, and devours them. (Rev. xx. 7-9.)

Oh, John, the heart sickens at such a scene as this, after all they have enjoyed.

Yes, James, it does : and well it might, to see what we are. For such is man ; and such has been his history from the beginning. He failed in innocence in the garden of Eden. Then without law, and it was the same afterward under the law. And it is no better now in this time of God's abounding grace and mercy. As we have seen, though man will be enjoying the glorious reign of Christ, with all its blessedness, yet there he will be as he ever was, in one scene of failure, and rebellion against God.

Truly this has been man's way from the very first, from the day that he was created upon the earth. And what debtors to mercy we are ! But if we have shewn out so unmistakably what we are, God on the other hand has shewn Himself to be a God of love indeed, full of pity and tender mercy. His compassions fail not. David says they are new every morning and fresh every evening, and truly we find it to be so in Christ Jesus. But if man turns against God's

beloved Son, there is no hope for him, neither in this world, neither in that which is to come.

Then we read, after this, that God will not endure the evil of men any longer. He has done everything He could, but all to no purpose ; evil is evil, and man is man, and there is no help or goodness in him. (Rom. iii. 10-18.)

This is sad indeed, but yet most true. Hence God will destroy this whole scene by fire. The elements will melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein will be burned up. Not done away with ; but as it were melted up, and formed anew, with every vestige of sin, and all its consequences for ever gone, never to return any more.

I am glad you referred to this, John, for it is quite a relief, after the sad scene which has been before us.

Yes, James, God always has a bright side for His people, and He would ever have us there ; because it is only from thence that we can look at these dark scenes aright, so that we may never get our minds confused or entangled by them. But just take a look at them, as seen in God's word, and then pass on and be thankful ; knowing that our path is ever upward and onward, to that home of glory where Christ is gone.

Then I think, John, it is the apostle Peter who tells us that in the new earth righteousness will dwell ?

He does, James, and what joy it gives to know it ! We have seen the sad consequences of sin dwelling in this earth, where we now are ; but in the new earth righteousness will dwell in its stead. Therefore God will be able to visit the earth, and even to dwell with men in a way He could not even in the time of man's innocence, in the garden of Eden, blessed as it was. Thus we see God will not be disappointed. He had set His heart upon man from the beginning, before ever the earth was. But sin came in, and deprived Him of their company. But now He will have it, in all its joy and blessedness, in a way He never could have had it, in the garden of Eden.

Well, John, after all, this is truly delightful. It more than makes up for all the sadness and sorrow that has been in the world. We read also of the new Jerusalem coming down to the new earth; prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband. This could not have been even in the millennium, for sin was still there. It could come into the air, but no further. But now sin is gone, the former things are passed away, and all is one scene of eternal joy and bliss.

This is the everlasting state in the new earth. But we must never forget that the church's place and portion is altogether heavenly. Our abode is the Father's house, according to the Lord's own word on going away, when He said, "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; I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 2, 3.)

It is, James; our place will be with Christ for ever. This satisfies every desire we have now, and it will do so for evermore. The joy of His presence will be everything to us, throughout eternity. The Lord grant that we may be kept quietly waiting for that glorious day, each one of us just doing the little things which He has given us to do; like Enoch walking with God, until the Lord Jesus come as the Bright and Morning Star. Thus shall we be ever ready to meet Him with joy.

Well, John, I have enjoyed this little talk exceedingly, and thank you very much, and I am sure it will be a great help to my soul, in making the Lord Jesus, and His great salvation, more and more precious to me.

I am very glad of it, James. I also have enjoyed it; and I do hope that the Lord Jesus will be ever before our souls, so that we may be found waiting and watching for that happy moment when we shall hear His voice, and see His face; and shall be with Him, and like Him for ever.