

Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;  
All I could never be,  
All men ignored in me,  
This I was worth to God whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

Judgment by type sets the future in a new and solemn light. We can no longer think of Heaven as a state of certain happiness, and Hell as a state of certain misery for every man whatever may be his ideal. They are now relative terms, so that one man's Heaven might be another man's Hell. If one hunger and thirst for God, then for him is prepared the beatific vision and the eternal service. He has his heaven, and is satisfied. If one seek nothing beyond himself and his own gratification, then he will be left to himself, and taste the fulness of his lusts. He has his hell and is satisfied. St. John was already in Heaven with his head on Jesus' bosom. Judas was in Hell as he went into the outer darkness. Each was at home, the one with Jesus, the other away from Jesus. None need be afraid that he who has followed Jesus will miss Heaven, or that he who has made the "great refusal" will be thrust into Heaven. One is afraid that some will inherit Hell and be content.

JOHN WATSON.

*NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE SECOND  
COMING OF CHRIST.*

IV. THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS.

A VERY important statement of Christ about His return to judge the world is found in John v. 25-29.

We have here, with stately repetition, two parallel assertions marked by conspicuous points of similarity and difference. The former is introduced by an emphatic formula

peculiar to, and very frequent in, the Fourth Gospel, "Verily, verily, I say to you." The latter assertion is designed to remove astonishment caused by the former: "marvel not at this, because," etc. Each assertion contains the solemn phrase, "there cometh an hour"; found also in chapter iv. 21, 23, referring to the Gospel dispensation now close at hand, in chapter xvi. 2, referring to the future persecution of the servants of Christ, in verse 25 referring to the fuller manifestation of Christ to His disciples, and in verse 32, referring to the dispersal of the disciples at the arrest of Christ. In the former of the two parallel assertions now before us, as in John iv. 23, our Lord adds, "and now is": but in the second assertion these words are conspicuously absent. This difference marks an important distinction. Verse 25 describes the immediate effect of the preaching of Christ and the Apostles: verses 28 and 29 refer to an event future even to us. In verse 24 Christ has already said that they who hear His word and believe in God who sent Him "have passed out of death into life." In the Gospel they have heard "the voice of the Son of God"; and it has given them "life." Their life is an outflow of the life which is in the Father and which He has given to be in the Son. And, by raising into new life those who hear His voice and them only, the Son performs an act of judgment. The solemn words, "an hour cometh and now is," call attention to the new and important era in the spiritual life of men created by the Gospel of Christ.

The astonishment evoked by the announcement of the gift of life to those who hear His voice, Christ removes, or rather supersedes, by a still more astonishing announcement touching another "hour" which also "cometh." Not only do the spiritually dead "now" hear the voice of Christ and rise into new life, but "an hour cometh" in the future when "all that are in the graves will hear His voice

and will go forth." No such universal statement as this is found in verse 25: for not "*all*," even of those to whom it is preached, will listen to, and receive life from, the Gospel. On the other hand, we are not told that all who are in the graves, though all will hear the resurrection voice, "will *live*." All "will go forth" from their graves; some to "life," others to "judgment." This distinction is important, and is maintained throughout the New Testament. Although the word *life* is frequently used indiscriminately for bodily life of all kinds on earth, beyond the grave it is always reserved for a holy and blessed existence with God. Consequently, our Lord could not say that all who are in the graves "will live," even though all will leave their graves. For not all who do so will escape from death. "A resurrection of *life*" is the privilege only of "those who have done the good things."

In this great passage, Christ puts in close juxtaposition two very different resurrections, each ushered in by His own voice, a spiritual resurrection in which those who accept the Gospel enter at once into spiritual life, and a resurrection at the last day when all the bodies of men laid in the grave will go forth, to life or to judgment, according to their works.

In close agreement with the above, we read in John vi. 39, and again with emphatic repetition in verses 40, 44, that "at the last day" Christ will raise those who now believe in Him and who thus have already eternal life. The same hope finds expression, from the lips of Martha, in chapter xi. 24. This mention of the last day carries forward the resurrection of the just to the close of the present order of things.

Up to this point we have found complete agreement, in the matter before us, between the various writers of the New Testament and the various types of thought therein embodied. St. Paul teaches that at a voice from heaven the

dead servants of Christ will rise, that all men will stand before Him in judgment, and that He will change the bodies of the just into the likeness of His own glorified body. The Synoptist Gospels represent Christ as teaching frequently that He will come from heaven with power and splendour and sit in judgment on the righteous and the wicked. And, in the passages just quoted, Christ asserts that at His voice all the dead will rise and will receive according to their works.

Other teaching different from, yet closely related to, the above meets us in the discourses of Christ to the Apostles on the night of His betrayal. He says, as recorded in John xiv. 18-20, "I will not leave you orphans; I come to you. Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no more, but ye behold Me: because I live, also ye will live. In that day ye will know that I am in My Father and ye in Me, and I in you." Similarly, in chapter xvi. 16, "A little while and no longer ye behold Me, and again a little while and ye will see Me." Also verses 22, 23, "Ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice . . . and in that day ye shall ask Me nothing"; and verse 26, "in that day ye will ask in My name."

These words, in their full sense, refer evidently to the gift of the Spirit promised so conspicuously in chapters xiv. 16, 17, xvi. 13-15, immediately before the words quoted above. And they were abundantly fulfilled in the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. On that day and in that Spirit Christ entered into a fellowship with His disciples far closer than that which they had enjoyed during His life on earth; and in this sense returned to them after the separation caused by His death. We have here an inward and spiritual coming of Christ. And, inasmuch as this closer union was conditioned by the resurrection of Christ, we may speak of the bodily return of the risen

Lord to the disciples from whom He had been snatched by death as the beginning of this spiritual return. In other words, the fulfilment of the promise before us began in Christ's appearance to His disciples on the day of his resurrection; and was completed in the gift of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. To this latter refers probably the phrase "in that day." The spiritual return was a real anticipation of the bodily return for which His disciples were eagerly waiting.

The coming of Christ at the end of the age is mentioned in John xxi. 22, "if I will that he remain till I come," in language similar to that of the Synoptist Gospels and of St. Paul.

In 1 John ii. 18 we read, "It is the last hour: and as ye have heard that Antichrist comes, even now are many antichrists arisen; whence we know that it is the last hour." The absence of the article twice, *ἑσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν*, indicates that the present time is marked by the characteristics of "a last hour." The Christian dispensation, which in one sense is the beginning of a new and glorious era of eternal life, in another aspect is the last portion of the present order of things. The use of the word "hour" to describe so long a period of time warns us not to press its use elsewhere as indicating a short period. But we notice that the Gospel dispensation, however long, is in a measure homogeneous. During the whole of it, amid various developments, God is governing the world in the same method. The words "Antichrist comes" recall the teaching of St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians ii. 8: and the statement that "even now are many antichrists arisen" is in close agreement with the preceding verse, "the mystery of iniquity already worketh."

We turn now to a book differing widely, in thought and expression, from all else in the New Testament and occupy-

ing there a position somewhat like that of the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament.

In Revelation i. 7, in close agreement with Daniel vii. 13, we read, "Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will wail before Him." Similarly in chapter iii. 11, xxii. 20, Christ says, "I come quickly"; adding in the latter passage, "and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." These are plain references to the return of Christ to judge the world.

In chapter ii. 5, we read, "but if not, I will come to thee and will remove thy lampstand out of its place, except thou repent." Similarly, verse 16, "repent; but if not, I come to thee quickly, and I will fight with thee with the sword of My mouth." Also chapter iii. 3, "if thou do not watch I will come as a thief, and thou wilt not know at what hour I will come to thee." These passages refer evidently to punishment inflicted, not at one definite moment at the close of the present order of things, but during the course of history. They thus stand related to the use of the term "Day of the Lord" by the prophets of the Old Covenant to describe any conspicuous national punishment.

The first four seals, in chapter vi. 1-8, open to us what seem to be consecutive historical pictures. At the fifth seal, in verses 9-11, we pass within the veil and hear impatient voices of the souls of the martyrs. The sixth seal opens to us a vision of the dissolution of nature, and we hear the cry of the lost, who tell us that "the great day of their anger is come." This can be no other than a picture of the final judgment. It is followed in chapter vii. by a vision of the sealed ones, led about by the Lamb as their shepherd, when "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." At the seventh seal, chapter viii. 1, there is silence

in heaven, marking a pause in the series of visions; and we see seven angels with seven trumpets.

With the trumpets begins another series of apparently consecutive visions. But this second series as a whole seems to be parallel, not consecutive, to the first series. For the total dissolution of nature under the sixth seal cannot be followed by the partial destruction described as occurring under the first four trumpets. The second series, like the first, leads up to the great consummation. For at the seventh trumpet (Rev. xi. 15) we hear an announcement, "The kingdom of the world has become our Lord's and His Anointed's; and He shall reign for ever and ever." In chapter xiv. 14, we have a vision recalling again that of Daniel vii. 13: "And I saw and beheld a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sitting like a Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown and in His hand a sharp sickle." In chapter xvi. we have a third series, of bowls, evidently, like the seven trumpets, parallel to the seven seals and leading up to the great consummation. The consummation of judgment is delineated in chapters xvii. and xviii., where we have, in vivid picture, the destruction of a great hostile power, followed in chapter xix. 1-8 by the Hallelujahs of the saved.

Chapter xix. 11-21 takes us back into the conflict, and shows us One seated on a white horse and leading forth to battle the armies of heaven. Before His advance fall the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire. The easiest explanation is that this picture delineates the struggle and victory and progress of the Gospel of Christ.

In chapter xx. 1, opens another vision, a sequel to that in chapter xix. 11-21. An angel descends from heaven, binds the serpent, and casts him into the abyss for a thousand years; after which long space of time he must needs be liberated for "a little time." The prophet adds, "And I saw thrones, and persons sat upon them, and

judgment was given to them." He saw also "the souls of those who were beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God." It is not certain whether the words following, "such as did not worship the beast, neither his image," are a further description of the martyrs or describe another class of persons in addition to, or wider than, them, whom the prophet also saw, viz., the faithful servants of Christ. In the absence of decisive evidence, it is perhaps better to accept this latter wider interpretation. We are told that the persons referred to "lived," *i.e.* were alive when the prophet saw their souls, though some of them had been beheaded and all were undoubtedly dead; and that they "reigned with Christ a thousand years." But this does not imply that they began to live at the beginning of the thousand years, or ceased to live and reign at its close. Satan was bound for a thousand years and then loosed, and during the whole of this time the prophet saw the souls of the martyrs and perhaps of other faithful servants of Christ living and reigning with their Lord. The thousand years note an extension, but not necessarily a limitation, of time.

"The rest of the dead did not live": *i.e.* they had not, as the martyrs had, a higher life which survived the death of the body. The words following, "until the thousand years were completed," do not assert or suggest that at the close of this long period they came to life. The assertion is purely negative. During the whole thousand years, while the servants of Christ lived and reigned with Him, the rest of mankind continued in a state of death. But we are not told either that they came to life, or that the saints ceased to live and reign, at the end of this period.

Verse 6 is a comment upon, and reveals the real significance of, the statement in verse 4. The words, "This is the First Resurrection," stand in marked contrast to "the Second Death"; and suggest another resurrection described



n verses 12, 13. This collocation of thought recalls John v. 25-29, already expounded, where the two resurrections are placed side by side. The life enjoyed by the saints reigning with Christ may well be described as a resurrection: for they were once "dead by reason of sins" and have been raised by the voice of Christ (John v. 25, Ephesians ii. 5, 6) into new life. And, in contrast to the resurrection of the body "at the last day," it may correctly be called "the First Resurrection." They who experience this earlier and spiritual resurrection are "blessed and holy": for to them the resurrection of the body will be a "resurrection of life," and they will thus escape "the Second Death."

The place in which the saints will live and reign with Christ is not mentioned. Nothing is said here about their reigning on the earth; and the statement in chapter v. 10 has no reference to the millennium. Christ now sits at the right hand of God: and, in the absence of other indication, we may assume that the "souls" of the martyrs, whom the prophets saw, reign with Him in heaven. Of their bodily resurrection and return to the earth, there is, in the passage before us, no hint.

In verse 7 we read, "When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be loosed from his prison, and will go forth to deceive the nations." Then follows the great apostacy. A vast multitude are gathered together to besiege the holy city: but fire fell from heaven and consumed them, and the Devil was cast into the lake of fire where were already the beast and the false prophet.

Then follows, in words recalling Daniel vii. 10, Matthew xxv. 31-46, the dissolution of nature and the final judgment: "And I saw a great white throne and Him sitting upon it, from whose face fled the earth and the heaven and place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books

were opened, and another book was opened which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from the things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead in them; and each was judged according to their works." We have here indisputably the judgment of all men, good and bad, at the close of the present order of things, already described, in similar language, by St. Paul, and by Christ as His words are recorded both in the Synoptist Gospels and in the Fourth Gospel.

If, as we have just seen, Revelation xx. 11-15 is a description of the final judgment, the apostacy described in verses 8-10 is in close harmony with the teaching of Christ in Luke xvii. 26-30, where He compares His own second coming with the Flood and with the destruction of Sodom; and in still closer agreement with 2 Thessalonians ii. 3-12, where St. Paul teaches that the *παρουσία* of Christ will be preceded by the revelation and *παρουσία* of a new and terrible form of evil. Compare especially Revelation xx. 8, "He shall go forth to deceive the nations," with 2 Thessalonians ii. 9-11, "whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. . . . For this cause God sendeth them a working of error that they may believe a lie." In other words, the various writers of the New Testament agree to teach that Christ at His coming will find the world in deep sin, and that, to many who expect Him not, His coming will be sudden destruction.

The peculiarity of the passage before us is that it interposes between the time of writing and the final apostacy a period of a thousand years during which Satan is bound, while the martyrs and probably other dead servants of Christ live, and reign with Him; and that their life is described as the First Resurrection. This binding of Satan for a limited though long time, followed by liberation and renewed activity, is an element not found elsewhere through-

out the entire Bible. This being the case, it must be interpreted with utmost caution, and in the light of whatever teaching in the Bible most nearly approaches it.

The splendid visions of the prophets, *e.g.* the concluding chapters of the Book of Isaiah, do not help us much, for in them we have no hint of subsequent apostacy; and for the more part the language used excludes the possibility of apostacy. The nearest parallel, in the prophets, to the passage before us, is to be found in Ezekiel xxxvii.—xxxix. The vision opens in a valley of dry bones. At the voice of the prophet, breath entered into them and the dead woke up into new life. This is explained to be a prophecy of national revival. And with the revived nation God makes a covenant of peace. Then comes an onslaught of distant Gentile nations led by “Gog, of the land of Magog.” From this tremendous attack Israel is rescued by fire from heaven, and Gog and his multitude suffer complete destruction. Lastly follows a picture of the restored temple and worship and of Israel dwelling safely in its own land. The closeness of the parallel leaves little room for doubt that these chapters of Ezekiel were before the writer of the Book of Revelation. Unfortunately, they shed little light on the passage before us. But that a national revival is depicted as a waking up of dead bones into life, is in complete harmony with the spiritual meaning given above to “the First Resurrection.”

The nearest and most instructive parallel is found in John v. 25–29, already expounded. For we have here two distinct resurrections, one present and spiritual, the other future and bodily, the one partial and the other universal. Similarly, in Ephesians ii. 5, 6, St. Paul speaks of some who were “dead” in consequence of their sins as already made alive and raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places. This teaching of St. Paul and of the Fourth Gospel contains all that is implied in the phraseology of Revelation xx. 4, 6.

For, certainly, those who have heard "the voice of the Son of God," and have thus "passed out of death into life," and whom God has "made alive with Christ" and "made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ" have experienced what may be called, in contrast to the final consummation, "the First Resurrection."

Of the binding of Satan for a long but limited time, to be again liberated for a short time, I can give no explanation fully satisfactory. But the binding must be a limitation, by supernatural power, of the activity of the great enemy of God and man. It follows the final overthrow of other hostile powers. But we have no indication that it will take place visibly before the eyes of men; or that it will interfere with the ordinary course of nature, as will the judgment described in verse 11. Still less have we proof that the binding of Satan will banish evil from the earth. Had this been so, for so long a time, he would not, on his return, have so quickly roused the nations to rebellion. The passage is most easily explained as announcing that the earlier victories of the Gospel will be followed by a removal, through an extraordinary manifestation of divine power, of the hindrances which the god of this world has been permitted to put in the way of its further progress.

The above exposition is all that is demanded and justified by the grammatical meaning of the words used in Revelation xx. 1-10. And it permits us to understand in its natural grammatical meaning the abundant and harmonious teaching of the rest of the New Testament. To some, it will seem to fall below the full meaning of the strong words used in the passage before us. But to these words we cannot give a stronger meaning without doing violence to much more abundant and plain teaching elsewhere.

If this exposition be correct, we may look upon the progress of the Gospel during the last eighteen centuries as a victorious war carried on by Christ against the powers of

evil which resist the advance of His kingdom; and we may expect still further progress. We may expect that the great forces which still oppose the work of God will be broken, and that the power for evil of the great spiritual enemy will be conspicuously limited for a long period. During this long period of spiritual peace and progress on earth, they who in loyalty to Christ have laid down their lives, and all who after faithful service have passed away from earth, are living and reigning with Christ within the veil, enjoying already a life which is an anticipation of their final reward. Strange to say, this long period of peace and progress will be followed, in the mysterious purpose or permission of God, by a liberation of the evil powers which for a long time have been bound; and by a consequent widespread revolt against God and His faithful ones. But this last uprising of evil will be short. The supernatural power which has already given to the Gospel its earlier victories will be again still more conspicuously put forth, and the power of evil be broken for ever. Then follows the great assize, the punishment of the wicked, and the New Earth and Heaven in which the saved will dwell with Christ.

From the above is evident that the writer of the Book of Revelation accepts to the full the harmonious teaching of the rest of the New Testament about the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the present order of things; and adds to it an important element touching the progress of the kingdom of Christ before His return to judge the world.

In my next paper I shall discuss another interpretation of the difficult passage I have just endeavoured to expound, the interpretation underlying the doctrine commonly known as Millenarianism.

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