

## 'After These Things'

### 5.4 After the Rapture, the Jewish Remnant – Particularly from the New Testament

*A summary of a part of a paper by J.N. Darby entitled: The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant: Published in Darby's Collected Writings – Volume 11 (Prophetic 4) Pages 134-142*



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In reading the New Testament, we need to distinguish between the earthly hopes and promises to Israel, and the heavenly hopes of the Church. It is impossible to set aside the promises to Israel, because the church does not replace them<sup>1</sup>. God's promises to His people cannot be undone – *'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance'* (Romans 11:29). In speaking of Israel, *'Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers'* (Romans 15:8). His rejection and death did not set the promises aside. Israel is now in unbelief, but after the

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<sup>1</sup> As modern 'replacement theology' or supersessionism would suggest (See Chapter 4.8 above).

Rapture of the church, there will be a pious, godly remnant owning Christ and owned by Him.

### **The Birth of Christ**

Luke commences with announcements and births of John the Baptist and then Jesus. The angel told Zacharias that many of Israel should turn to the Lord their God, a people prepared for Him (see Luke 1:16-17). There is a people prepared for the Lord before He comes (not sovereign grace meeting sinners in their need, as it is with us). Mary was told that Yeshua/Jesus (Jehovah the Saviour) should be called the Son of the Highest and that He would be given the throne of His Father (see Luke 1:32). The song of Zacharias (Luke 1:67-79) is wholly composed of the divinely-given celebration of God's visit to His people to redeem them and to raise a horn of salvation for them in the house of His servant David (see v.69). The Jewish shepherds received the announcement of His birth.

However, these persons were not typical of those of Israel – they were the believing, pious 'remnant'. Later, Anna and others were looking for redemption in Jerusalem: they evidently knew one another. Simeon saw in '*light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel*'. (Luke 2:32). It is therefore absolutely clear that this remnant is a people prepared for Jehovah, awaiting earthly deliverance.

The Gentiles come later in Luke.

### **Christ's Rejection by Israel**

Matthew's gospel reveals how Christ was presented to the Jews and rejected by them. Following His rejection, God's plans for the Remnant were interrupted so as to accomplish something brighter and more blessed (viz. the church, the time of the Spirit, grace and the Christian dispensation). But to suppose that God had invalidated His thoughts as to Israel, would be to subvert divine testimonies and undermine God's faithfulness.

The old was still in the mind of God to be fulfilled at the appropriate time. Like the prophets, Matthew passed over the intervening church period. He introduced Christ as the accomplishment of prophecy and promise, giving His genealogy and showing how prophecy was being fulfilled – see Matthew 1:22, 2:5 and 2:15. '*The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus*' (Revelation 19:10). The church does not have any part in this, already being with Christ.

In the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7) the 'ye' refers to the Remnant, not the self-righteous Jews – nor does it directly refer to Christians (though we can learn from the moral teaching). They were to expect persecution and a consequent reward in heaven. Those who were obedient to His teaching were like the man building his house on the rock see (Matthew 7:24). On the other hand, unbelieving Israel would be cast into prison till the uttermost farthing was paid (Matthew 5:26).

## Christ's Teaching

In Matthew 10, Christ sends out the twelve. They were not to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were to declare the kingdom of heaven to be at hand, and to enquire who was worthy, that is to seek the righteous remnant (not poor sinners). Although they were to speak peace everywhere, the peace would rest only on the sons of peace. They were to shake the dust off of their feet before those hostile Jews who did not receive them. Verse 18 (*'Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake'* etc.) goes beyond the Lord's lifetime and the church period. The faithful would be brought before the Gentile enemies, and be hated of all men for Christ's name's sake. This ministry was to Israel and would not be completed till the Son of man came.

In Matthew 23, the disciples and the people are on Jewish ground. They were to be subject to the teachers who had set themselves in Moses seat, even if those teachers had rejected the *'prophets, and wise men, and scribes'* (v. 34). Their ancestors had stoned the prophets and killed those who had been sent, but still, Jerusalem would never listen. Often Jesus (Jehovah) would have gathered Jerusalem's children together: now the desolate city would not see her Lord until she repented, saying, *'Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord'* (v. 39).

In Matthew 24, His disciples ask about the judgment and the end of the age (not the 'world'). This again is in line with Jewish thought. While Herod's temple would be destroyed in AD70, the Lord was speaking of what would happen at the end. False Christs would come, saying, 'I am the Christ', and even deceive the elect. There would be many troubles, culminating in the abomination of desolation of which Daniel spoke, and those who were in Judea would flee to the mountains. But before He comes, the gospel of the kingdom would be sent to all the Gentiles<sup>2</sup>. Finally, the Messiah would return and associate Himself with the godly remnant in Judea and Jerusalem. What language could be more understandable?

The whole scene is Jewish: it could not be Christian. Indeed, it has no direct application whatever to true Christians, because when the Lord comes, they would already have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The Lord will come publicly: He will be Judge, whereas when He comes to Rapture His saints, it will be secretly in perfect grace (See Chapter 1.4 - The Rapture and the Appearing). A Christian who has been beguiled by thoughts of going through the tribulation must have renounced Christian hopes or have never understood them.

## Peter's Ministry

On the cross, the Lord interceded saying, *'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'* (Luke 23:34). After the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter says, *'And now, brethren, I know that ye did it in ignorance, as also your*

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<sup>2</sup> Note – not the gospel of the grace of God.

*rulers... Repent therefore and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. He may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you, whom heaven indeed must receive till the times of the restoring of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since time began' (Acts 3:17-19 Darby). Repentance was called for, but few repented.*

As far as we can see, Peter did not teach the doctrine of the church. Christians remained strictly attached to Judaism, zealous of the law; priests were obedient to the faith, and some even continued to be priests. Also, Peter never taught Jesus to be the Son of God, yet it had been revealed to him, and he had confessed *'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'* in Matthew 16:16. Peter's message was, *'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ'* (Acts 2:36).

Following that, Christ could then speak of the Church, for it was to be founded on Peter's confession. But it was still a future thing – *'on this rock I will build my church'* (Matthew 16:18). In Christ's death, He gathered together into one the children of God; in His resurrection, He was declared Son of God with power. Christ's death and resurrection laid the excellent foundation for all our blessings.

When the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, came the Church (or the assembly), was formed, and the Lord added daily such as should be saved (see Acts 2:47). Those who previously composed the remnant became its nucleus. It was a newly instituted body, formed by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and united to the Head, Christ in heaven.

However, God's promises to Israel were not abrogated.

### **Paul's Ministry**

Paul is the apostle who gives us the Assembly (or Church). Paul is also the only apostle who speaks of the Rapture of the saints taking place before the Appearing of Christ. This ministry changed everything: we now have a heavenly gathering on earth. Paul's free ministry, distinct from that of the twelve, had already been started by Stephen. He had testified to a heavenly Christ, a Man in glory, and was put to death. Saul of Tarsus, the chief persecutor of Christians would have heard that testimony.

Later, Saul, when drawing near to Damascus, was arrested by the same Man whom Stephen saw, and from the same place too. From the glory He said, *"Why persecutest thou me?" ... I am Jesus whom thou persecutest'* (Acts 9:4-5). The Lord told him that He, Himself, was being persecuted, although the objects of that persecution were the Christians. From this we infer that the Lord's body was here, identified with its glorified Head in heaven. It became the starting point for Paul's ministry as to the Church. Jew and Gentile were all one as He taught, *'God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all'* (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Now God introduces the sovereign fullness of His grace, a doctrine entirely unknown in the Old Testament. Paul speaks of the mystery, Jews and Gentiles forming one body, and says, *'The preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest and by prophetic scriptures, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith'* (Romans 16:25-26 Darby). Both Jews and Gentiles are consequently reconciled to God through faith and made one by the Holy Spirit. This was the body of Christ, the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word for 'church' or 'assembly', ἐκκλησία/ekklēsia/Strong-1577, means 'a calling out'. We see it in *'The Lord added daily to the assembly'* (Acts 2:27 Darby). *'He set some in the assembly; firstly, apostles; secondly, prophets'* (1 Corinthians 12:18 Darby). The Church is called out to participate in the sufferings of Christ, later to be presented to Himself as His bride, without spot or wrinkle (See Ephesians 5:27). The same word is also applied to the particular churches or assemblies of Christians in different places because they formed the assembly of God in that place. No other meaning is possible.

### **The Hope of the Church**

The Church is heavenly in its calling and belongs to Christ in heaven. It forms no part of the course of events of the earth. This makes its Rapture so simple and clear as we see from Colossians 3:4, *'When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.'* The church's hope and glory is Christ Himself. He is our life; our life is hidden with Him; He is our righteousness; the glory that has been given to Him (sonship), He has given us; we are members of His body; we are of His flesh and of His bones. We suffer with Him now but will reign with Him in a coming day, conformed to His image.

### **The Rapture**

The Church is not connected in any way on earth with Christ's appearing or second coming. She is already spoken of as sitting with Him in heavenly places (see Ephesians 1:20), so she belongs elsewhere – she only awaits being brought there bodily. Her immediate outlook is her being taken physically to where He is. *'From heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord'* (1 Thessalonians 4:6).

This being the case, a person who maintains that he does not go to be with Christ until His Appearing, is denying the proper hope and relationship of the church. Ignorance is one thing, but denial is another. Grasping the fact of our being with Him at the Rapture, not the appearing, changes all our spiritual thoughts and affections. Our hope is not even to be in glory with Him, wonderful as that is, but it is being with Him. *'I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also'* (John 14:3), *'So shall we ever be with the Lord'* (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

There are several ways in which scripture presents the return of Christ:

- The general fact: Christ will come again, and we will be with Him. The saints of our dispensation *'have been made to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth'* (Revelation 5:10 Darby).
- The world, evil and in confusion, will ripen into rebellion. The believer knows and believes that at Christ's Appearing and His kingdom, God will judge the living and the dead. It will be an earthly kingdom and an earthly judgment.
- The saints of our dispensation will have, through grace, a unique association with Christ. They will have met Him in the air. They will also have been before the judgment-seat of Christ, giving an account of themselves to God, but this part of their privilege, not punitive, for they will already be like Jesus. He will introduce them into His Father's house, placing them in the heavenly seat of government with Himself. This is the Rapture of the saints, and it precedes the Appearing.

Before the Appearing, the world will have become entirely apostate, and the man of sin will have been revealed. The Church will already have been taken, not being of the world, but risen with Christ. On the other hand, the Rapture does not depend on any earthly event. The Christian's hope is, therefore, not a prophetic subject at all. No one knows when the Rapture will take place.

The saints leave the world and worldly religion by going out to meet the Bridegroom. The cry *'Behold the Bridegroom cometh!'* (Matthew 25:6). went out at midnight, but it could have been at any time. We know that the Bridegroom did tarry, and the sense of His coming was lost. It is the loss of the expectation of immediacy of the Lord's coming that lays behind the public church's departure from simplicity, and its fall into clerical authority and worldliness. It lost its spiritual authority. In Matthew 24, what leads the wicked servant into mischief is not the denial of the Lord's coming, but the loss of the sense and present expectation of it. The Christian is constantly waiting for the Lord to come.

When therefore is the Christian to expect the Lord? – Always.

### **Thessalonians**

An example of those who were awaiting the Lord's return were the newly converted Thessalonians. They might not have had time to accumulate much teaching, but their expectation was a divine witness to the world. They were not waiting for any earthly events – just waiting. They saw themselves to amongst those who would be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord (see 1 Thessalonians 4:15). We need to be like that.

We know that the Thessalonians were distressed about those who had perished for Jesus' sake, that they would not be here to enjoy His coming. They were also troubled by false teachers alleging that that day of



the Lord was already present. Paul corrected this error by showing that the dead would be raised, and then the living ones would go up to meet Christ with them. He explained that it was an absolute moral absurdity for the Lord's people to go through the judgment since they would already be in heaven along with the Judge. This confirmed their expectation, enlivening their faith and brightening their hope despite the persecution. The terrible persecution that they were enduring, was but a pledge from a righteous God that they would have rest and glory, not trouble when the kingdom came. The Thessalonians' minds were, therefore, re-established, clear and peaceful.

## **The Tribulation**

In Revelation 12:10-12, it is said, *'And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!'* This is not the Rapture, because that will have taken place earlier. These happenings are in the subsequent seven years. 3½ years before the close (that is middle of the half-week of Daniel), Satan, the accuser, will be cast out of heaven. What follows is the great wrath of Satan for those living upon the earth. For one class, persecution and death had now ceased; for another, it was just going to begin.

As regards our passing through the tribulation (a question which often arises on this matter) the scripture makes it very simple. How do we know that there will be a tribulation? Scripture tells us. But equally, it makes it clear that the Jews will live in it, and the church will not be in it:

- *'I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth'* (Revelation 3:10). That was to a Christian assembly, Philadelphia.
- *'These [are they who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb'* (Revelation 7:14). This is clearly after the Rapture.
- *'It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it'* (Jeremiah 3:7). 'He' would refer to a faithful one of Israel.
- *'There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book'* (Daniel 12:1). This refers to Israel.

The time of temptation referred to above, shall come to try them who dwell on the earth. This is more general; it is not the great tribulation of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Matthew, which is exclusively Jewish.

## **Israel and the Appearing**

In the epistle to the Romans, specifically chapter 11, we have the general doctrine as to the Remnant of Israel. An elect believing remnant will be grafted into their own olive tree and become one nation – ‘all Israel.’ That could not be the Christian assembly, even with Jewish believers – they had never been broken out of the Jewish olive tree.

In that coming day, Israel will be blessed on earth. *‘He shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe’* (2 Thessalonians 1:10). The Remnant of Israel will be blessed despite the tribulation. They will form a separate class from unbelieving Israel and the church. They come in after the sealing of the 144,000 – the elect of the twelve tribes of Israel (see Revelation 7:4), experiencing God’s protection, nourishment, refreshment and comfort. Their position is different from ours.

## **Conclusion**

We should not confuse things. The scripture is as plain as can be. Anybody who confounds the day of Christ with His coming to receive the church does not understand the day we in, nor His coming, nor the church. Confounding the day of the Lord and His coming to receive the church, is a subversion of the whole nature of the relationship between both Christ and the Church, and Christ and the world. It is far more than a mistake in terms. The denial of the Rapture brings the church down to an earthly position, destroying its whole character