

their celestial glory, to the Lord and Master at His appearing. In the words of the Psalmist:

“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
 Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;
 If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there!
 If I take the wings of the morning,
 And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
 Even there shall thy hand lead me,
 And thy right hand shall hold me.”

—Psalm 139: 7-10.

4. The Ascension of the Spirit and Bride

When is this work of glorification to be wrought? When the Holy Spirit shall have consummated His work on earth.

We learn from Acts 15:14 that, during the present Dispensation, God is visiting the Gentiles “to take out of them a people for his name.” It is indeed significant that this Divine name was bestowed first upon *Gentile Christians*. Acts 11:26 —“The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Dr. A. J. Gordon says: “It was not by accident and as a term of derision that the first believers received their name: but the disciples were *divinely* called Christians first in Antioch. This was the name pre-ordained for them, that ‘honorable name’ by which they are called (James 2:7).”¹ It follows, therefore, that when this work of gathering out a people wearing the Divine name, is accomplished, the administration of the Spirit will come to an end. This people will then be translated to be one with Him; the Head will receive the Body unto Himself; the Bridegroom will receive the Bride “as Christ also the Church” (Eph. 5:29).

The Holy Spirit who came down on the Day of Pentecost to form the Divine Body on earth, will, when Jesus comes again, return with the Body to Heaven whence He originally came. He will present the Body to the Head as a Bride adorned and made ready to meet the Bridegroom. He will present her to Him “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any

1. A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit*, p. 206.

such thing . . . holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). This glorious event may properly be termed the Ascension of the Spirit, followed by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7).

This event is described in detail by the Apostle Paul, in 1 Thess. 4:13-17, to which passage we again turn at this point: "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep: that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord*, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." It should be observed that the Apostle makes these sublime affirmations "by the word of the Lord," that is, by the authority of Christ and by inspiration of the Spirit. Let us never forget that when we stand upon the promises of Jesus, our feet are planted on the Rock of Ages. This hope is indeed an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast.

It will be noted also that the Apostle has in mind two distinct classes, in this Scripture: First, the "dead" in Christ *i.e.*, those whose bodies are in the grave; second, "that are alive, that are left"—in other words, the saints who shall be living on earth when this glorious Consummation shall take place. The dead in Christ shall rise first, he says, and those saints who may happen to be living at the time, shall, together with the resurrected dead, be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The same general idea is presented in another well-known Scripture, 1 Cor. 15:51-54. Here the Apostle says: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: we all shall not sleep, but we shall be changed." That is, while undoubtedly there will be saints living on the earth at the time this happens, they, together with all those saints whose bodies shall have been raised from the dead, *shall all be changed*. They shall all be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last

trump: for the trumpet shall sound"—that is, the Divine Decree that time shall be no more, shall be spoken—"and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we" (*i.e.*, the living) "shall be changed, for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." The reason for the "must" is given in a preceding verse, v. 50—"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." The Apostle goes on to say: "But when this corruptible" (those saints whose bodies are to be raised) "shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal" (those saints who may be living *in Christ* at the time) "shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Those saints whose bodies are in the grave will put on incorruption by *resurrection* and accompanying transfiguration; and those saints living at the time all this shall take place will put on immortality by *transfiguration* alone.

In this manner the Spirit will quicken our mortal bodies before He presents us to the Lord. But again we find that the means through which He will operate will be the Word. Such expressions as "the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout," "the voice of the archangel," "the trump of God," "at the last trump," "the trumpet shall sound," etc., are metaphors indicating that *the Word of God shall be spoken*. He will speak the Word, proclaiming that the temporal process is at an end, and *it will be done*, as in the Creation. The Word of God will be spoken and the miracle will be wrought, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." What profound meditation this teaching engenders in our minds and hearts!

This shall be the glorious consummation of the Spirit's mission upon the earth. It is referred to pointedly in numerous scriptures.

[Eph. 4:30]: Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto *the day of redemption*. [Rom. 8:23]: Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. [Rom. 8:19]: For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. [Acts 3:20, 21]: even Jesus, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, etc. [1 John 3:2] Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. [1 Cor. 15:24]: Then cometh the end, when he [Christ] shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and all power.

[As the Son, our Lord, shall ultimately turn back His Kingdom and His authority to the Father, that *God may be all in all* [1 Cor. 15:28], so the Holy Spirit shall yield His administrative office to the Son, when the latter shall appear to gather the Church unto Himself in glory.]

Throughout all these intervening centuries, the Spirit and the Bride have been looking forward hopefully, yearning for the appearing of our Lord. This hope is expressed in the closing words of the New Testament: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. . . . Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:17, 20).

The sublime events connected with the Ascension of the Spirit are prefigured in the Hebrew Scriptures in the pre-nuptial experience of Isaac and Rebekah. This story is one of the beautiful idylls of the Old Testament. Abraham, as the story goes, at the command of God, took his son Isaac to the top of the mountain of Moriah, which he reached after a three days' journey; bound his son, laid him upon the sacrificial altar specially prepared for the occasion, and actually lifted his knife to kill his unresisting son—when suddenly the voice of the Angel of Jehovah interrupted the proceedings and bade the patriarch take a ram caught by its horns in a near-by thicket and sacrifice it as a substitute for Isaac. Thus Abraham received his son back from the altar in a typical resurrection. Isaac then temporarily disappears from view. By and by, Abraham calls his servant, Eliezer, and commands him to go forth and find a bride for Isaac. The servant makes a journey into the far country of Mesopotamia, and there he finds Rebekah, drawing water from a well. He enters with her into the house of Laban, her brother, takes out the precious gifts sent by Abraham in the name of Isaac his son, and shows them to Rebekah. She consents to become Isaac's bride. Eliezer, the servant, leads her forth to meet him, talking to her about him as they proceed on their journey. Then suddenly, unexpectedly, unheralded, Isaac himself appears, having come forth to meet his bride and to take her unto himself (Gen. 24).

Two thousand years later, on the very spot where Isaac was offered and received back in a figure, the Son of God was offered and received back from the dead *in fact*. He offered Himself as a propitiation for the sins of the world, and was raised up from the dead the third day. For two thousand years, he, like Isaac, has disappeared from mortal view. But during that time, the Holy Spirit, like Abraham's servant, having

come forth from the Father in the name of the Son, has been seeking and preparing a bride for the Son. She is called by his name "Christian," meaning "of Christ." The Spirit has found her at the Old Gospel well—the well of living water, glad tidings of salvation. One by one, as we accept Christ on the terms of the New Covenant, we become members of His spiritual Body, we are those "belonging to" Him. The Spirit enters out fleshly lives as Eliezer entered the house of Laban, and unfolds the precious gifts and privileges of adoption sent by the Father in the name of the Son. The Spirit is leading us along the highway of time, talking to us constantly through the Word of the One Altogether Lovely, the absent and unseen Bridegroom. Then suddenly, unexpectedly, unheralded, He will appear. He will come in the clouds to receive His Bride, the Church, unto Himself in glory. Thus it will be seen that the story of Eliezer's seeking out a bride for Isaac, and the coming forth of Isaac to meet Rebekah, is typical in every detail of the Spirit's work in preparing the Church and presenting her as the Bride to the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will suddenly appear in the heavens and take her unto Himself.

"Come, Lord Jesus!"

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!" (Rom. 11:33).