

The King's Highway

REV. L. K. MULLEN, NOV. 60

AN ADVOCATE OF SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS

VOL. XXXVIII

MONCTON, N. B., AUGUST 31, 1960

No. 493

His Coming and Our Going

By E. W. Lawrence, London, England

The Lord himself shall descend . . . we which are alive shall be caught up . . . ever be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

First Thessalonians deals much with the glorious hope. Paul speaks of the Second Advent as it is related to salvation (1:2-10); as it is related to service (2:1-3:11); as it is related to sanctification (3:12-4:12)—“called . . . unto holiness”; “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love . . . to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, . . . at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” as it is related to sorrow (4:13-18); and then to spirituality (5:1-24).

Verses 16 and 17 of chapter 4 speak of His coming and our going, of return and release, of the return, the resurrection, the rapture, and the reunion. There is a sound, a resurrection, an ascension (for we rise to meet Him), a meeting and an eternal union.

First as to HIS COMING, four points come to the fore:

(1) He descends from heaven, the heaven to which He ascended when He left earth and went back home to glory, after His resurrection. For the space of thirty-odd years He'd humbled himself, and done so to the extent of dying on Calvary's cross. But though wicked men crucified Him, God took hold of Him, raised Him from the tomb, and eventually seated Him at His own right hand in heaven above. It is “from thence” that “He shall come again,” as one of the old church creeds puts it.

“Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory . . .,” He said. The Father did just that. “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool,” the Father told Him. The Saviour is so seated, enthroned in regal splendor today. With the eye of faith we see Him there and know for ourselves that He prays for us, and that He is able to save from and to the uttermost those of us who approach Him in penitent faith.

(2) “With a shout” will be descend, as the shout of a victorious Commander in Chief.

No powers on earth or in hell will be able to impede His progress on that great day. None will hinder the fulfillment of His word, “Rise up, . . . my fair one, and come away.” When He cried for Lazarus to come forth, Lazarus, who was dead, obeyed. When the Saviour returns, all His sleeping ones will hear and obey His summons.

(3) “With the voice of the archangel” also. Michael no doubt is referred to here. To him especially has the guardianship of the redeemed people of God been committed. Daniel 10:13; Jude 9; and Revelation 12:7 should be read at this junction. Those three verses should then be coupled with Daniel 12:1. The four verses teach that Michael's particular task is to protect the nation of Israel, protect the bodies of the saints, and overthrow the satanic powers as and when and while they resist the pleasures and purposes of Jehovah.

(4) “With the trump of God” also shall the Saviour come again.

In the Old Testament, trumpets were sounded to gather the people for worship, and when they mustered for battle. I Corinthians 15:52 speaks of “the last trump,” and Revelation 11:15-19 of the seventh trumpet. The trumpet of the Lord shall sound to call God's redeemed ones to meet the Saviour in the air.

Now a word as to OUR GOING. Five points come forward here:

(1) We shall “be caught up . . . to meet the Lord.” It is a decisive act of God, this, as if we were taken by force and removed from this mortal plane. Matthew 11:12 says “the violent” take the Kingdom “by force,” while Acts 23:10 shows how Paul was rescued by the Roman soldiers from the mobs by the force of their arms.

Carried away by a force that cannot be controlled—that is the real inner meaning, just as in John 10 the wolf came, attacked the flock, caught the sheep, and carried it away; and in Acts 8, where the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip from his interview with the colored-skinned Abyssinian brother.

(2) “The dead in Christ” are the ones to be caught up, and then joined by those believers who are alive at the Saviour's return. “Together with them” are Paul's three fundamental words.

“Caught up,” we shall then “be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” The redeemed of all ages, from righteous Abel to the latest and newest convert to our holy faith. Together—raised dead and changed living, one mighty army of God, one ransomed host—and no power on earth, no demon in hell, no law of gravity will be able to hold us back!

(3) We “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,” says this scripture. “In clouds” is the best reading, for there is no article (the) in the Greek, as if the reference was not to the clouds in the atmospheric heavens, but rather to groups, masses, or “clouds” of God's people caught away to meet the returning Lord.

(4) “To meet the Lord” in person; for He, after all, is the Center of attraction on that morning of splendor.

Ap-anetesis, as the word is in Greek, carries with it the sense of going out to meet a person in order to return with him. The word itself occurs three times in the New Testament. According to Matthew 25, when the midnight cry pealed forth, the virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom. Many of the brethren in Rome, when they heard of Paul's presence in Italy, went as far as Appii Forum to meet him. They returned with him to the metropolis. And here in I Thessalonians 4, when the Lord returns, we shall be caught up to meet Him.

It is not just a single (one-way) ticket to glory that

(Continued on Page 8)