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"CAUGHT UP IN THE CLOUDS."

"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 Thes. 4:17.

The scene here described is undoubtedly the same event, as shown by the same Apostle in 1 Cor. 15:51,52, where he calls it our change from a natural, corruptible, weak, earthly body, to a spiritual, immortal, powerful, heavenly body. Those members of "the seed" (of God), Christ, who lie in death's cold embrace, shall arise spiritual, immortal, etc., but we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. These descriptions seem to portray the change of all who have part in "the first resurrection," the victors overcomers – who had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark. Because changed to immortal (incorruptible) beings, "on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:4-6.)

This must be a description of the change of the "little flock" or "bride" since the second or great company are not called overcomers, and do not overcome the beast, image and mark, but are subject to their power, until they (beast, etc.) are overthrown in the time of trouble already commenced upon them. It is the "body of Christ" who are the overcomers. "To him that overcometh, I will grant to sit with me in my throne even as I overcame." "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Now notice that it is this class only which is mentioned in our text – "The dead in Christ" (members

of "the body") and the living of the same class, who are "caught up" – more properly "caught away." (So rendered in the Diaglott.)

The change in our being which takes place in connection with our catching away as shown in the corresponding passage of 1 Cor. 15:51,52, viz.: from natural, earthly bodies to spiritual, heavenly bodies, would seem to indicate to us that this change is itself the catching away referred to – "and so shall we ever be with the Lord." When changed – "made like unto Christ's glorious (spiritual) body" – we will from that instant be as invisible to fleshly beings as He is, and as Angels are. Our Lord we recognize as invisibly present, and Angels are said to be "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation," and to "encamp round about them that fear God," though we see them not.

This change from the natural to the spiritual life and body will be our "second birth." We were begotten of the flesh, and in due time were born of the flesh – a fleshly, human body, in the likeness of the first Adam. This was our first birth. Again we were begotten of God with the word of his truth, that we should be (future) a kind of first fruits of his creatures (Jas. 1:18.) and we will reach that condition when "born of the spirit" – into the full likeness of the "second Adam" – the Divine spiritual life and body. Thus we have even now become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and partakers of the Divine nature, and our change will be this new life completed. Then what Jesus said of all spiritual bodies will be true of us also. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.... The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit – invisible, incomprehensible to humanity. "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

Our text says we are "to meet the Lord in the Air." The Greek word here used for air, is in three other places used symbolically to

represent government or controlling power over Earth (Eph. 2:2, Rev. 9:2 and 16:17.) We believe it to be used in the same way here: When changed – made like him and united with him we are associated in power and it becomes our work "to execute the judgments written: This honor hath all his saints." (Psa. 149:9.)

As to the time of our change, that it is at, (or during) the sounding of the "last trump," – the "seventh," Rev. 10:7, and 11:15-18 – and after the Lord himself has descended is plainly stated. We need not here repeat the evidences that the "seventh trump" began its sounding A.D. 1840, and will continue until the end of the time of trouble, and the end of "The times of the Gentiles," A.D. 1914, and that it is the trouble of this "Great day," which is here symbolically called the voice of the Archangel when he begins the deliverance of fleshly Israel. "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince. (Archangel) which standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." Dan. 12:1. Nor will we here, again present the conclusive Bible proof that our Lord came for his Bride in 1874, and has an unseen **[R153 : page 1]** work as Reaper of the first-fruits of this Gospel Age, (Rev. 14:16) in separating between wheat and tares and gathering the living into a condition of readiness for their change. The final preparation is made when the Bridegroom comes, and they that are ready for union, go in with him to the marriage – into the "guest chamber" where they may finish the last touches of personal adornment. Then comes the inspection and casting out of one not having on a wedding garment; after which the marriage takes place, for his wife will have "made herself ready." (Rev. 19:7.)

Jesus himself does not make the Bride ready, but the knowledge of his presence, and the thought of the coming union with him when ready, make her zealous in the use of the agencies

already provided for her preparation – the Spirit and the Word of truth.

We have seen that in his days of presence it will be as it was in Noah's days – The world will know not. (Matt. 24:39, Luke 17:26.) We are told that the day of the Lord is a day of trouble, a day of clouds and thick darkness. (Zeph. 1:15. Joel 2:2.) We are told also that "as the lightning which shineth" (not as the shining, but as the invisible electric fluid which causes the shining) "so shall the Son of Man be in his day." (Matt. 24:27. Luke 17:24.) Now if he is to be as lightning and his day, a day of clouds as the above texts assert, are they not in harmony? In the natural storm when we see flashes from lightning and hear peals of thunder, it gives evidence to us that atmospheric changes are taking place, that the vitiated and corrupt "air" is to be changed and we rejoice that it will be pure after the storm.

We now find a harmony in the account of our gathering. As we long since found "the voice of archangel" and "the trump of God" were symbols of the closing epoch of this age and its troublous events, so now we find "the clouds" to symbolize the gathering of the trouble in that epoch; "the lightning" to symbolize or illustrate our Lord's presence "in His day," and that "air" is used as the symbol of the spiritual throne from which Satan ("the prince of the power of the air") is to be deposed, and to which our Lord and His joint-heirs are to come.

The great time of trouble as a storm has been and continues gathering over Earth. The air (the spiritual "powers of darkness," surrounding and ruling over "the present evil world," under the direction of "The Prince of the powers of the air," (Eph. 2:2,) "the Prince of this world" – age,) becomes more and more vitiated until the storm breaks. The Prince of darkness now works in the hearts of the children of disobedience to the accomplishment of his own will

– viz: in oppressing and opposing justice and truth to the affliction of mankind. The clouds are gathering and men's hearts are beginning to fail for fear of the approaching storm – "for fear of those things that are coming on the Earth." Soon it will break in all its fury. But though it fills all hearts with fear and dread, in its final results, it will prove a great blessing to the earth (mankind), displacing the present "powers of the Air" ("powers of darkness," – spiritual wickedness in high-controlling-places") and giving place to Earth's rightful ruler – Jesus and his Bride, also spiritual beings (powers of the air.) So after the storm shall the "Sun of righteousness rise with healing in his wings," and the kingdom of darkness shall give place to the kingdom of light, and mankind will rejoice in the pure air and cloudless sunlight of that perfect day.

Notice also that the flashes of lightning come from among the clouds, and become more and more vivid as the storm increases. How the various scriptures interpret each other: "As the lightning, so shall the Son of Man be in his day." "Behold he cometh with clouds." "The day of the Lord is a day of trouble, of clouds and thick darkness." "He maketh the clouds His chariot; He walketh upon the wings of the wind." Psa. 104:3.

Israel at Mount Sinai was a type of the world receiving instructions from God during the time of trouble. They saw the fire from the Mount enveloped in clouds, so in the time of trouble, the world will learn of the Lord's presence by the judgments [fire] issuing from the kingdom [mountain] though obscured and enveloped by the clouds and **[R153 : page 2]** darkness [trouble] of that time. Yes, "He shall be revealed in flaming fire." (2 Thes. 1:8.)

Moses describes the scene when the people did exceedingly fear and quake, &c.: "Thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb when the Lord said unto me – Gather me the people together and I will make them hear my words and they shall learn to fear me

all the days that they shall live upon the Earth." So during the day of wrath, God will plead by judgments with all flesh and they will learn a lesson never to be forgotten. "And the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire. Ye heard the voice of words but saw no similitude." As they learned the lesson and knew of Jehovah's presence, &c, but "saw no form," so during the time of trouble it will be also "Behold he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see [optomai, recognize] him." All will indeed recognize his presence as indicated by "the great day of his wrath having come," but none but the Saints shall "see Him as he is" for, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Israel said "Behold the Lord our God hath showed us His glory and His greatness and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more then we shall die." And they entreated that Moses should be thereafter a mediator to communicate God's will and they would obey Him. (Deut. 4:11.)

Get the reality of which that was but a shadow and we can see how "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh see it together," and yet none but the Holy see the King and none but those born of the spirit – spiritual bodies can see the Kingdom of God. (Jno. 3:3.)

Psa. 97:1-6, describes the establishment of the Kingdom of God: "Jehovah reigns,...clouds and darkness are round about him... fire goes before him and burns up his foes on every side. His lightnings enlightened the world, the earth [people] saw and quaked. Mountains [Kingdoms of Earth] melted like wax at the presence of Jehovah, at the presence of the Lord of the whole Earth and all the peoples saw His glory." [New trans.]

How this harmonizes with all the other pictures of the day of wrath. First, the clouds of trouble; second, the presence of the Lord

(as the lightning) whose presence is manifested to the world by flashes of light and knowledge which will more and more disclose to the world His power and glory and reign, and this fire of judgment consumes all opposition to the reign of righteousness.

We conclude then that if "He cometh with clouds" of trouble, etc., we shall be "caught away in clouds" of the same sort; that is after he has come. If we are prepared, we shall be caught to meet him during the gathering of the trouble, before the storm bursts.

David [anointed] was doubtless a type of the church in her deliverance, as pictured in the song (2 Saml. 22) in which he says (vs. 10) "He bowed the heavens also and came down and darkness was under his feet...He was seen upon the wings of the wind, and he made darkness his pavilion round about him...and thick clouds of the skies....He sent forth and took me; ...He delivered me from the strong enemy" [death]. Yes our Lord when he has come and made trouble and darkness his pavilion lifts his bride – delivers her from the strong enemy of the fleshly nature, into the perfection of our new nature like unto Christ glorious body. Lord help us to be ready for the change that we may be thus "caught away."

"Forever with the Lord,
Amen, so let it be,
Life from the dead is in the word;
'Tis immortality."
