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GATHERING TO CHRIST.

"Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Psalm 1:5. [Should be Psalm 50:5 - site Editor.]

This gathering is not at death, nor continuously before and during the Gospel age, but takes place after and in consequence of the Lord's return. This is one of several things to transpire after the Lord's coming, as indicated by the context. From the third to the fifth verse inclusive, is evidently a prophecy of that to which Paul refers in 2 Thess. 2:1: "The coming; of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him."

This is one of the evidences that what is foretold in the Old Testament that God will do, is fulfilled by the Son of God, and which proves the unity of their work.

That this refers to the second coming is evident because the first was in the past when Paul wrote. That it does not refer to His final coming, or manifestation to the world, is clear, because when He thus comes "all the saints" are to come with Him. Zech. 14:5. Their gathering to Him must precede their coming with Him. Jesus says: "I go to prepare a place for you; [the church as represented by the twelve] and...I will come again and receive you to myself." Jno. 14:2-3.

It is evident that the object of Christ's second coming is to receive or gather His church to Himself. Because of this and because neither [R155 : page 3] Christ nor Paul mentions any interval of time for work between the coming and the gathering, it is most commonly supposed that the gathering is immediately after His coming. So when we speak of the Presence of the Bridegroom, and express our conviction that He has come to deliver His own and

gather them into the heavenly Canaan, we are met with the objection, "If He has come to gather us, why are we not gathered, and why do all things continue as before, and we are left to toil on in the enemy's land?" From the standpoint of the objector our claim is a seeming absurdity; and for those who have never seen the evidences there is room for great sympathy. When a position is not understood it is readily perverted, and we need patience when we are misrepresented.

Whoever will read the passage from which our text is chosen, will see that there is a fiery scene, or some kind of judgment, [fire means judgment,] and therefore an interval of time, either long or short, in which that work of judgment is to be done, between the coming and the gathering. The fact that this interval is not mentioned by Christ and Paul, in the passage referred to above, is certainly not proof that such an interval does not exist. The whole truth is seldom, if ever, found in one connection. In Luke 19:15 and onward is an account by the Lord Himself, of a work of examination after He had returned, and before the reward. As the reward is to be with Him and like Him, (these two things being included in each other,) this is evidence that there is an interval of time between the coming to gather the saints and the gathering itself. Of course we believe that the intervening work is in reference to the gathering, that being the object for which He came.

There are facts associated with the deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt, which we offer as having a bearing, typically, on this subject of the Lord's coming and the deliverance of the church. In that picture it appears that the nation of Israel represents the whole church, or household of faith, including not only the saints, – a "little flock," – but also "them that fear His name, small and great," – "a great multitude," – while Aaron represents that portion of the church called "saints," who are to be most directly

associated with Christ as a Great High Priest, and in the work of executing judgment. The gathering of the saints unto Christ, is doubtless foreshadowed by Aaron going to meet Moses in the Mount of God. And, it will be observed, this event had reference not only to the execution of judgments on the Egyptians, but also through the plagues to the deliverance of Israel.

In the third chapter of Exodus we have the record of the Lord appearing to Moses at Horeb, or Sinai, – "the Mountain of God." Ver. 1. The Lord appeared in the burning bush. There is no reason to suppose that Moses saw the Lord. He was present yet invisible, but Moses had evidence that the Lord was there, by His word. This is one of the evidences that a spiritual being can be present and yet be invisible. The ground was holy.

After announcing Himself, the Lord said: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them." Verses 7-8. Here are stated the fact that He had come and the object for which He came, and yet we know it was a considerable time after He came to deliver them, before they were actually delivered. The relation between the Lord's coming then, and the deliverance of Israel, is as intimate as the relation between the Lord's coming now, and the gathering of the church. "I am come down to deliver them" is as closely connected as "I will come again and receive you to myself." Now we know that there was time between that coming and deliverance; will not our readers admit the possibility, yea, the probability, of there being an interval of time between this coming and deliverance? To enforce this thought, put yourselves in place of the Israelites, toiling on under the terrible Egyptian bondage. If Moses should come to you with the statement, "Be of good cheer, comrades, the Lord has come to deliver you," would there not be as much reason to dispute the

claim as there is to dispute the one we make, and for the same reasons: "We are not delivered and all things continue as they were?"

There was, of course, a longer time between the coming and the deliverance of the whole nation, than between the coming and the exaltation of Aaron. All was done on time and order. "Aaron, the saint of the Lord," (Psalm 106:16) escaped the plagues, and assisted Moses in their execution as a means to the salvation of Israel – the Lord's son, even His first-born. Exod. 4:22. And here some are to be accounted worthy to escape the things coming on the earth; (Luke 21:36) as overcomers to sit with Christ [the prophet like unto Moses – i.e. the antitype] in His throne, and have power over the nations to break them, (Rev. 2:26-27 and 3:21,) "To execute vengeance upon the nations, and punishments upon the people. ...To execute upon them the judgments written: this honor have all the saints." Psalm 149.

The double statement, "Vengeance upon the nations" and "punishments upon the people," may have more importance than might be supposed. The record is given of ten plagues upon Egypt, three of which came on both Egypt and Israel, but from the "seven last plagues" all Israel were exempt. To appreciate fully the above statement, one must read six chapters in Exodus, beginning with the seventh. It is when the fourth plague is threatened that the Lord says: "I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarm of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to-morrow shall this sign be." Chap. 8:22-23.

In describing the scenes associated with the deliverance of the church down here, John the Revelator speaks of "seven last plagues" also, which we may reasonably expect to stand in the order

foreshadowed in the type. "Seven last plagues" implies that others preceded them, as in the type.

We think the same order of events is to be found in the antitype as in the type. In Rev. 14:1 we see 144,000 overcomers with Christ on Mount Zion. "These are they which were not defiled with women" [churches, only corrupt churches would defile,] and are "the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." Verse 4. We believe this company are the saints as represented by Aaron; and as Moses and Aaron went together in their work, so these "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." These went up to meet Christ, their brother, in Zion – the Mountain and City of God. (Heb. 12:22, Emp. Diag.)

If it be asked "If Sinai was the place of meeting of Moses and Aaron and was called the Mount of God, why do the saints meet Christ at Zion instead of Sinai? We answer: All we have to deal with are the revealed facts. Sinai was the Mount of God in the legal and typical dispensation, and from it the Lord shone forth in the thunderings and lightnings of the law. But we have Paul's assurance that "ye are not come [or coming] unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire...but ye are come [or coming] to Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, &c. Heb. 12:18-22. From this we learn that Zion is the Mount of God in the Gospel age and onward; and we learn, too, that it is a heavenly and not an earthly mountain.

tants of a spiritual mountain will themselves be spiritual, and therefore that the saints meet Christ in the spiritual condition – the ideal of Christian perfection. "Be ye also perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This is a heavenly and not an earthly ideal.

This thought is clearly illustrated by the fact already mentioned that Moses stood as God [a spiritual being] and not as a

man, in his dealings with both Aaron and Pharaoh. Moses came the first time as a man and was rejected, but when he came as a God he delivered his people. What was true of Moses is true of Christ, for Moses is a type of Christ. It is evident that Aaron was as surely a type of the spiritual saints, as Moses, in the exercise of the great power, was a type of the spiritual Christ. Coming in glory does not necessarily mean shining with a literal light. The judgments and deliverance then, were because Moses and Aaron came with the glory of their power. So also will it be of Christ and the saints.

The 144,000 being the first fruits to the heavenly or spiritual life are, or represent, God's temple in heaven, as the living, mortal part of the church has always been, or represented God's temple on earth. And in the judgment scene that follows, and harvest of the earth, (not of the first fruits) as described in Rev. 14:14-20, the angels, or messengers, are said to come out of the temple which is in heaven.

It seems that after the exaltation of the "little flock," and contemporary with the above-named judgment scene, there goes forth the message, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of his judgment is come, &c." Verse 7. This language seems to be addressed to the "great multitude" who, at the time the "little flock" are exalted, are found in adulterous union with the **[R156 : page 3]** world, and therefore defiled with corrupt churches, as the "little flock" were not. Verse 4. Because of the confusion they are called Babylon. The object of this message and the attending judgments "or punishments upon the people" is to cause the downfall of Babylon, by producing a complete separation between Christians and the world with whom they have been united and under whom they have suffered as slaves. Never did the Israelites serve the Egyptians more slavishly than is the nominal church serving the world. They dare not as yet assert their independence.

But there must come a change. The standard of Christianity must be exalted. The "great multitude" must wash their robes, and make them white. Rev. 7:14. Had their garments not been "defiled" they would not have needed washing. Christ gives all His people clean robes, but the mass have suffered their garments to become spotted with the flesh and by contact with the world. [R156 : page 4]

We suggest that this exaltation or washed state of the church is foreshadowed by the complete separation of Israel from Egypt in the land of Goshen, and that the three first plagues represent the means by which the change is to be brought about. We understand that washed and separate state to be the "Sea of glass" condition. Rev. 15. If it was a victory to be exempt from the "seven last plagues" in Goshen, it can be no less so now. Surely no one will say that it will not be a great victory when the "great multitude" of Christendom shall rise from bondage to the Beast, His Image, &c. It will be a glorious victory for them, for truth and for God. One of meager interest in comparison, was the type. Coming to our own day we can see another shadow of it in the judgment that broke the shackles from four millions of human slaves. But the victory that will bring men to the "sea of glass" is as much greater than those, as spiritual things are greater than natural things.

Remember the ones addressed by this judgment message is a motley crowd, – a world church. Those who obey the call get the victory; and those who do not obey it but continue on the world's side, or continue to worship the beast after the message is given, will suffer the full expression of wrath as represented by the "seven last plagues." This terrible fate is expressed by the third angel.

As the exemption from the seven last plagues in Goshen preceded the final deliverance from Egypt, so it seems that the "sea of glass" condition which is "mingled with fire" precedes the final

entering of the temple in heaven of this "great multitude" of victors. Though protected from the plagues, yet "No man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." Rev. 15:8.

The real "sea of glass like unto crystal" is before the throne (Rev. 4:6) and is not mingled with fire. This of Rev. 15, which is "mingled with fire" is "as it were, a sea of glass." The people protected in Goshen were, "as it were," saved, but not actually saved from Egypt until after the plagues, when the Lord brought them out, that they might serve Him. Ex. 4:23.

That the great multitude who are protected from the plagues on, "as it were, a sea of glass," do finally enter the heavenly temple and take their places as servants "before the throne" which is the locality of the real "sea of glass like unto crystal," seems evident by comparing Rev. 4:6 and 7:9-15. The sea of glass is "before the throne" and the great multitude serve "before the throne" in the temple. If we are now occupying, "as it were, a sea of glass," it seems as if it would prove that the throne had been already established before which the sea of glass is located. We confess our ambition has been and is to have a part with Christ in His throne, and not to occupy the sea of glass before the throne, – i.e., to rule and not merely to serve. The condition on which this high position is to be gained has been ably presented by others, and of the responsibility involved in the sacrifice more may be said in another article. "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him."

J. H. P.
