

## **PLACE OF MEETING.**

To be "forever with the Lord" has ever been an important element of the Christian's hope. This hope has cheered and strengthened the true pilgrims in all generations. This has been the case even where a very imperfect understanding has obtained. Whatever has been believed among Christians as to how, when, or where they should meet the Lord, as to the fact of being with Him, they have often said, "That will be Heaven for me."

We cannot think that only those who fully understand the subject beforehand will be accepted in His presence. In such a case, perhaps none would be accepted. But we believe it is both duty and privilege to search and learn more and more of this and all other Bible subjects. The beauty and harmony of the various parts of the word and plan is seen when each part receives due attention.

Those who have believed that the spirits of just men could be made perfect and enter into the immediate presence of God, and there meet and dwell forever with the Lord, have in consequence regarded the coming of the Lord with indifference, so far at least as their own hope is concerned. On the other hand, those who have seen the import of Jesus' word, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also," have necessarily made much of the return of Christ.

While the latter class are doubtless correct as to the time of meeting the Lord, we think both may be holding extreme views as to the place of meeting. One class expects to meet Him in Heaven itself, the immediate presence of God, and the other class associate the meeting with earthly conditions, while we believe the meeting will be in a condition midway between the other two. The Lord shall descend, and we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and

so shall we ever be with the Lord. Comforting words! 1 Thess. 4:16-18.

It may seem strange to some, in view of the simplicity of Paul's statement, that we should raise the question, "Where shall we meet the Lord?" Is it not plainly said we shall meet Him in the air, and is not this easily understood? But Peter says that he himself and "beloved brother Paul also," when speaking of these things, said things "hard to be understood." 2 Pet. 3:15,16. And we have seen that the truth concerning the trumpet's voices and fire associated with His coming does not lie on the surface. We need not be surprised, then, if the same be true of all the circumstances attending.

By the study of the Bible we have been led to believe that as we advance from natural to spiritual things there is a corresponding advancement in the signification of words. Many examples of this are familiar to all careful readers. Take for example the terms bread, water, garment, light, heat, cold, hunger, thirst, nakedness, darkness. No one would think of giving these words the same signification, when applied to spiritual things, as when applied to natural things. A man might walk in the light of the brightest sun that ever shone, and yet be in the grossest spiritual darkness. All can apply this to the other terms.

Air and spirit are primarily the same, yet who would think of reading "air" instead of "spirit" in the sublime statement of the word, "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration [or in-breathing] of the Almighty giveth him understanding?" Or when it is declared "God is Spirit," who but the grossest materialist would read it, "God is air?" When Jesus breathed on His disciples, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit," all Christians recognize the advancement in the use of words according to the relation between natural and spiritual things.

A further application of the same principle is seen in the fact that Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air," and when his spiritual kingdom is overwhelmed by the incoming kingdom of Christ, it is said, "The powers of heaven shall be shaken." In contrast with this shaking, Paul says we are to receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken or removed. Heb. 12:27,28.

Let this same principle be kept in mind, and our being caught up to meet the Lord in the air will have the deep significance of our being exalted to power with Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven. The kingdom of the air [firmament] and "the Kingdom of Heaven" are primarily the same.

Place and distance in natural things are used to represent condition in the spiritual. No one would think of applying the expressions "coming to God," or "coming to Jesus," literally. When we sing "Nearer, my God, to Thee," or when Paul says, "Let us draw near with a true heart," literal place or distance is not thought of, but to be more and more like our great Example is the burden of the heart of the true worshiper. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11:6.

Translation (or change) is a term which we believe is subject to the same law of interpretation. As words are translated or changed from one language to another, and so changed in form, and as men or things may be translated or changed from one place to another, so spiritually men may be translated or changed from one condition to another. Thus, when men come over from the devil to the Lord's side, they are said to be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Col. 1:13. All will agree that this translation is a change not of place, but of condition. If this principle holds good as to the begetting of the Spirit, may it not also hold good as to the birth of the Spirit.

In view of this so common principle of the word, we cannot regard with favor the idea that the saints are to be caught away in the flesh (however perfect that flesh may be) to meet Christ in any locality. The translation, in our mind, can mean no less than a change from the natural condition to the spiritual condition. The ascent of Aaron, the saint, to meet Moses in the Mount of God, is clearly a type of the saints going up to meet Christ. The mountain is a type of the mountain or Kingdom of God, in which we shall meet Christ. From that time forward, Moses and Aaron were manifested in power and great glory. So from the time the saints are exalted, they will be manifested or made to appear in power and great glory.

That the saints are not to be in an earthly condition at that time seems clear from Paul's statement that we are not come (or coming) to Mount Sinai, a mount that could be touched, that burned with fire, &c., "but ye are come [or coming] to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," &c. Heb. 12:18-22.

If it were an earthly mountain, it could be touched. Paul says this one can not be touched; hence it is a heavenly or spiritual mountain – a very high spiritual condition. When the Deliverer comes out of Zion, we may safely conclude that it is not an earthly army with guns and broadswords, but a heavenly army, wielding the sword of the Spirit, which sword proceeds out of His mouth, i.e., "The Word of God." The victory of that army will surely be a blessing to the nations. Oh, that we may be prepared to meet Christ in His Kingdom!

J. H. P.

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