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John Gill's

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY

Book 7—Chapter 5

**OF THE SECOND COMING OF
CHRIST,
AND HIS PERSONAL APPEARANCE**

The personal appearance of Christ will be before the resurrection of the just, which is the first resurrection; that will be at the coming of Christ, which might properly have been treated of before that resurrection; but that I chose to lay before the reader in one connected view, the separate state of the soul after the death of the body, until the resurrection, and the resurrection of it: and for the same reason I have treated of the doctrine of the resurrection in both its branches together, of the just, and of the unjust; though the one will be a thousand years before the other; and many events will intervene between them; as the conflagration of the world, the making of the new heavens and the new earth, and the dwelling and reigning of Christ with his saints therein, and the binding of Satan during that time; all which will follow the personal appearance of Christ, and will be treated of after that, in their order.

There have been various appearances of Christ already; many in an human form before his incarnation, as a presage and pledge of it; but his principal appearance, and what may be called his "first" appearance and coming, was at his incarnation; there were several appearances of him to his disciples after his resurrection, and to Stephen, and to the apostle Paul, after his ascension; and there was a coming of him in his kingdom and power sometime after to take vengeance on the Jewish nation for their rejection of him, and the persecution of his followers. There is now an appearance of Christ in heaven as the advocate of his people; and there is a spiritual appearance of him at conversion, and in after visits of his love, and communion with

him; and in the latter day there will be a great appearance of Christ in a spiritual manner, or a coming of him by the effusion of his Spirit upon his people, when his spiritual reign will take place, elsewhere treated of; after which will be the personal appearance of Christ to reign in a still more glorious manner. Hence his appearance and kingdom are joined together, when he will judge both quick and dead (2 Tim. 4:1), and this will be attended with great glory, and is called his "glorious appearing" (Titus 2:13), and in distinction from his first coming and appearance at his incarnation, it is called his "second" (Heb. 9:28), which will now be treated of,

1. By giving the proof of the certainty of it, that Christ will most surely appear personally to judge the world, and reign with his people; which may be most firmly believed, depended upon, and looked for; and this will appear,

1a. First, from what the patriarchs before and after the flood have said of it; for so early has it been spoken of, as may be observed from the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, recorded by the apostle Jude 1:14, 15. "Saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all"; which prophecy, whether it was written or not, is not certain, nor how the apostle came by it, whether by tradition, as the apostle Paul had the names of the magicians of Egypt, or by divine revelation; however, it is made authentic by the Spirit of God, and is to be depended on as fact; and is to be understood, not of the first, but of the second coming of Christ, as appears by his attendants, "ten thousands his saints"; such and such a number of them were not with him when he came in the flesh, but his second coming will be "with all his saints"(1 Thess. 3:13), and by the work he is to do, to execute judgment on all, and to convince of and punish wicked men for their words and works; (see Eccl. 12:14; John 3:17). Job also declared his faith, that Christ his living Redeemer should "stand at the latter day on the earth", that is, the latter or last day of the present world; since it is connected with the resurrection of the dead he believed in, and the future judgment (Job 19:25-27, 29). Also David the patriarch, as he is called (Acts 2:29), speaks of the coming of Christ to judge the earth and world, and the people of it with righteousness; and which is repeated, to denote the certainty of it (Ps. 96:13; 98:9).

1b. Secondly, the certainty of Christ's second coming and personal appearance may be confirmed from what the prophets have said concerning it; for it has been "spoken of by the mouth of them all" (Acts 3:21), and though the prophecies greatly respect his spiritual reign, yet are intermixed with many things concerning his personal coming and appearance; and it requires skill and care, being attended with some difficulty, to distinguish and separate the one from the other; and besides these, there are some which chiefly and plainly respect his personal appearance and kingdom; as,

1b1. The prophecy in Daniel 7:13, 14 where, after the destruction of Antichrist and the Antichristian states in the spiritual reign, signified by the slaying and burning of the "fourth beast", follows in a natural order the coming of the "Son of man" to take possession of his kingdom; Christ said to be like one, either in conformity to the

language of the former visions, his kingdom being humane, gentle, just, and wise, as well as powerful, and not beastly, as the others; or because he was not yet become man; or rather the "as" or "like" is not an "as" of similitude but of certainty, as in Matthew 14:5, John 1:14, Philippians 2:7, and being described as coming "with the clouds of heaven", fixes it to his second and personal coming, which is always so described (Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7). The "Ancient of days" he is said to come to, is God the Father, the eternal God; they that brought him near him are either the saints, who hasten his coming by their prayers; or the angels: or it may be impersonally read, and "he was brought"; which denotes the august and magnificent manner in which he will be personally and visibly put into the possession of his kingdom and dominion; which will have a "glory" beyond all expression, and will be "everlasting"; it will never be succeeded by another; and though Christ's personal reign on earth will be but a thousand years, yet his whole reign, personal and spiritual, will be of a long duration, and which in scripture is called "everlasting" (Gen. 17:8; Lev. 16:34). Besides, this kingdom, when delivered up, will not cease, but will be connected with, and issue in the ultimate glory, in which Christ will reign with his saints for ever.

1b2. Another prophecy in Daniel 12:1-3 respects the second and personal coming of Christ; for he is meant by Michael, who is "as God", as his name signifies, equal to him; the "great prince", the prince of the kings of the earth, and the head of all principalities and powers. "Who standeth for the children of Daniel's people"; meaning the election of grace among the Jews, on whose behalf Christ will stand at the time of their conversion in the latter day; previous to which it will be a time of great trouble; both to the saints, when will be the slaying of the witnesses; and to the antichristian states, when the vials will be poured out upon them, which will bring on the spiritual reign; after which will be the personal coming of Christ, here implied, since the resurrection of the dead will follow, and when such will be rewarded in the kingdom of Christ, who have been eminently serviceable in his interest; and the rest of the chapter is taken up about the time when these things shall be.

1b3. The prophecy in Zechariah 14:4, 5 respects the second and personal coming of Christ; since "all the saints" will come with him, and descend with him on earth; when his feet shall stand on the mount of Olives, and when Christ will be king over all the earth (Zech. 14:10), and the saints will be in a sinless state (Zech. 14:20, 21), though there are some things which respect the spiritual reign of Christ, and a time of distress previous to it (Zech. 14:1-3, 6-8).

1b4. The prophecy in Malachi 4:1-3 respects not the first but the second coming of Christ, when the day of the Lord shall "burn like an oven"; the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all that therein is shall be burnt up; and "all the wicked" shall perish in the conflagration; be burnt up "like stubble", and be properly "ashes under the soles of the feet" of them that fear the Lord; to whom it will be a glorious day, on whom the sun of righteousness shall arise (Mal. 4:4).

1c. Thirdly, the certainty of Christ's second and personal coming to reign on earth, may be evinced from several sayings and parables delivered by him. Not to omit the petition directed to in the prayer commonly called the "Lord's Prayer; Thy kingdom come", connected with another, "thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven"; the sense of which is, that the kingdom of God might come, and so come, that the will of God might be done by men on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven; which petition, though it has been put up thousands of times, has never yet been fulfilled, nor never can be but in a perfect state; and there will be no such on earth till the resurrection state takes place, and Christ personally appears in his kingdom and glory.

1c1. First, the answer of Christ to the question of his disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matthew 24:3 given in the following part of the chapter, seems to respect the second and personal coming of Christ; for though it is so expressed as that it may be applied to his coming in his kingdom and power to destroy the Jewish nation, and so to be the end of their world, church and state; yet what is said of that, and of the signs of it, may be considered as types, symbols, and emblems of, and to have a further accomplishment in the second coming of Christ, and the end of the present world; whose coming will be like lightning, swift, sudden, at an unawares, and local and visible; for "then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven" (Matthew 24:27, 30), that is, the son of man himself, as the sign of Jonah is Jonah himself; who will personally appear in the lower heaven, so as to be seen by all the tribes of the earth, who shall mourn on that account: and "they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven"; which, as has been before observed, is a distinguishing and peculiar characteristic of the second coming of Christ; which will be "with power", seen in raising the dead, burning the world, binding Satan, making new heavens and a new earth, and setting up his glorious kingdom in it; and so "with great glory", his own, his Father's, and that of the holy angels; and then he will "send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet" (Matthew 24:31), and with such an one, and with his angels shall he descend in person from heaven (1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7), and those he will employ to "gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"; that is, the raised saints, who will rise at this time in the several parts of the world where they died and were buried; and whom the angels shall collect together, and bring with the living saints changed, to Christ in the air, where he will be seen. But of "the day and hour" of Christ's coming "knoweth no man, no not the angels in heaven" (Matthew 24:36). Moreover the coming of the son of man will be "like the days of Noah" for carnality, sensuality, and security (Matthew 24:37), &c. which agrees with the accounts other scriptures give; as that it will be like that of a thief in the night, sudden and at unawares; and that when persons are crying peace, peace, great pleasure and happiness, sudden destruction comes upon them; and therefore, since the son of man comes in an hour unthought of, persons ought to be "ready" for it (Matthew 24:44), for nothing is more certain than death, the coming of Christ, and the judgment day.

1c2. Secondly, The parables in Matthew 25:1-46 all respect the second coming of Christ. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins, describes the state of the church under the gospel dispensation, as consisting of true believers, and formal professors, and their different behavior, until the coming of Christ; when the door will be shut, the door of the word and ordinances; for after the spiritual reign, and in the millennium state, they will be no more administered, and Christ, and his gospel, will be no more preached; and so no more a door of faith and hope for sinners. Before the personal coming of Christ, all the virgins, both wise and foolish, will be asleep, unconcerned about his coming, off of their watch and guard, and in no expectation of it; and, having little faith about it, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" To this state answers the Laodicean church state, lukewarm, indifferent, and regardless of divine things; which will bring on, and issue in the last judgment of the people, as its name signifies. Christ, in this parable, is all along represented as a bridegroom, and as such he shall come (Matthew 25:1, 5, 6, 10) when the church, his bride, will be made ready, and come down from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband; when she, the bride, the Lamb's wife, having the glory of God upon her, shall dwell with him in the new Jerusalem state; which is the marriage chamber they that are ready shall enter into with him.

The parable of the talents, in the same chapter, respects the same time, and describes our Lord's giving gifts to men, upon his ascension to heaven, and since; to some more, and others less, of which they make a different improvement: and also his "coming" again, after a long time, and reckoning with them; which will be done when he personally appears; and who will, in the resurrection state, distribute honours and rewards to his servants, according as they have made use of the talents committed to them. The chapter is closed with an account of the Son of man coming in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and sitting on the throne of his glory, summoning all nations before him, and separating the good from the bad, and passing the definitive sentence on each, and executing it.

1c3. Thirdly, the parable of the nobleman, in Luke 19:12, &c. is similar to that of the talents, in Matthew 25:1-46. By the nobleman is meant Christ, who is of noble extract indeed; as the Son of God, he is the only begotten of the Father; as man, he sprung from the Jewish ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and from a race of kings of the line of David. By the "far country" he went into, heaven is designed; which is the better country, a land afar off, from whence Christ came at his incarnation, and whither he went after his ascension, and where he will remain till his second coming. His end in going thither, was "to receive for himself a kingdom"; to take open possession of a kingdom that was appointed for him; and which he did, in some sort, at his ascension, when he was made, or declared, Lord and Christ; and more fully will, in the spiritual reign, when the kingdoms of this world shall become his; but most openly, clearly, and plainly, at his personal appearing and kingdom; which will be the time of his "return", when he will appear manifestly instated in it, and possessed of it; and then will he call his servants to an account for the money he committed to them, to make use of in his absence; and according to the use it shall

appear they have made of them, they will be rewarded in the millennium state, signified by giving them authority over more or fewer cities.

1c4. Fourthly, the words of Christ in John 14:2, 3 cannot well be neglected; "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and receive you unto myself". By Christ's "Father's house", is meant heaven, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; in which there are many mansions, dwelling, resting places for the "many sons" he, the great Captain of their salvation, must, and will bring to glory; and hither Christ is gone, as the forerunner, both to take possession of heaven for them, and to prepare it for their reception of it; for though it is a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, in the purpose, council, and covenant of God; yet Christ is further preparing and fitting it for them, by his personal presence, and powerful mediation, while they are preparing and working up for the self-same thing, by his Spirit within them; and when they are all gathered in, and made ready, he will come again in person, and raise their bodies, and reunite their souls to them, and take them, soul and body, to himself, to be with him where he is, first in the millennium state, and then in the ultimate glory.

1d. Fourthly, that Christ will come personally on earth a second time, may be most certainly concluded from the words of the angels, in Acts 1:11 at the ascension of Christ to heaven; "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven". The angels reproved the apostles, that they stood gazing at Jesus, as he went up to heaven, being desirous of seeing the last of him, as if they were never to see him any more; whereas he would come again from heaven, in like manner as they saw him go thither: as he ascended in person, in his human nature, united to his divine person, as the Son of God; so he should descend in person, in the same human nature thus united; "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven": and as his ascension to heaven was visible, he was seen of angels, and by the apostles; so his descent from thence will be visible; "Every eye shall see him"; not a few only, as then, but all: and as a cloud received him out of their sight, when he went to heaven; so when he comes again, he will come in the clouds of heaven: and as he was attended by angels, who escorted him through the regions of the air; so he will be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels: and though no mention is made in this narrative, of his ascension with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet attending it; yet, as it was foretold in prophecy and type, no doubt is to be made of it; "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet!" (Ps. 47:5), and certain it is, he will descend in such manner; "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God!" (1 Thess 4:16) and as his ascent was from the mount of Olives (Acts 1:12), it is very probable his descent will be on that very spot; since it is said, that when the Lord shall come with all his saints, "his feet shall stand in that day on the mount of Olives" (Zech. 14:4, 5).

1e. Fifthly, the second coming and appearance of Christ, may be confirmed from various passages in the sermons, discourses, and epistles of the apostles. And,

1e1. From the words of Peter (Acts 3:19-21). From whence it appears, that there was then to come, and still is to come, "a time of the restitution of all things"; which cannot be understood of the gospel dispensation, called the time of "reformation"; for that had taken place already; nor of the restitution of the brute creatures to their estate of paradise, of which some interpret (Isa. 11:6, 9; Rom. 8:19-23), for which I can see no need nor use of, in a perfect state, as these times will be; nor of the restitution of gospel doctrines, ordinances, discipline, and worship, to their former purity and perfection, which will be accomplished in the spiritual reign; but of the restitution of all the bodies of the saints, a resurrection of them from the dead, and a restoration of them to their souls; and of the renovation of the world, which will be at the second coming of Christ: and when the time fixed for it is come, then will God "send Jesus Christ" from heaven, where he now is, and where he will be retained till that time, and then he will descend from thence, when the saints in their resurrection state shall be judged; and though their sins are already "blotted out" by the blood of Christ, and for his sake; and a comfortable application of it is made to the consciences of all penitent and converted persons; yet there will be then a public blotting of them out, or a declaration that they are blotted out, never to be seen nor read more; which will be done before angels and men; and then it will be "a time of refreshing" indeed, "from the presence of the Lord"; for the tabernacle of God will now be with men, and he will dwell with them; and there shall be no more sorrow and weeping, crying and pain (Rev. 21:3, 4).

1e2. There are various passages, in which express mention is made of the coming of Christ; of his appearing a second time, unto the salvation of his people; of their waiting for his coming, looking for, and hastening unto it, and loving it (Heb 9:28; 1 Cor. 1:7; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:8), and of what the saints shall be, and shall have then; that they shall appear in glory with Christ, and shall be like him, and shall have grace given them, and a crown of glory likewise; and shall be the joy and crown of rejoicing of Christ's ministers (Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2; 1 Pet. 1:13; 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Thess. 2:19), and also of what shall then be done by Christ; all the saints shall be brought with him; the dead in him shall be raised, and both quick and dead be judged; and the counsels of all hearts shall be made manifest (1 Thess. 3:13; 4:14,16; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Cor. 4:5).

1e3. In all those places in which mention is made of "that day", that famous, that well known day, so much spoken of and expected (2 Tim. 1:12,18; 4:8), and of the day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10) and of the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6) and of the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30), the time of Christ's second coming, and personnel appearance, is meant; which will be sudden, and at an unawares, like a thief in the night; till which time the saints commit themselves into his hands; and when the work of grace, in its utmost extent and influence on soul and body, will be completed, and they will be unblameable before him, and their bodies redeemed from mortality, corruption, and death.

1f. Sixthly, in the book of the Revelation, frequent mention is made of the visible, quick, and speedy coming of Christ, and of what shall be then done by him; as in

Revelation 1:7; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20 and in particular of his descent from heaven, for the binding of Satan the space of a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3), where he is described by his office, an Angel, not a created, but the uncreated one; nor is it unusual for Christ to be called an Angel; he is that Angel who appeared to Moses in the bush; and who went before the children of Israel in the wilderness; and who is called "the Angel of God's presence", and the Angel, or "Messenger, of the covenant": and he is described by his descent "from heaven", whither he went at his ascension, and where he is now retained, and from whence he will come at the last day; and by what he had in his hand, a "key" and a "great chain"; a key to open the bottomless pit, to put Satan into it, and shut him up therein; and who so proper to have this key, as he who has "the keys of hell and death?" (Rev. 1:18), and a great chain to bind him therewith; and which will be greater, though shorter, than what he is now held with; and with which he will be bound faster and closer, and laid under greater restraints than he now is; so that he shall not be able to do the harm and mischief, and practice the deceit among the nations he now does, by instilling evil principles into them, and stirring them up to evil practices; and so will he remain bound, shut up, and sealed, for the space of a thousand years.

2. The locality of Christ's second coming, and personal appearance; or the place from whence he will come, and where he will appear.

2a. The place from whence he will come; heaven, the third heaven, where he now is in human nature, into which he was received at his ascension; and where he will continue till his second coming, and from thence he will then be revealed; he will descend from heaven to earth; he came down from heaven to earth at his incarnation; but that his coming was not local, not by change of place, which cannot agree with him as the omnipresent God; but by assumption of nature: but as his ascent to heaven in human nature, having assumed it, and done his work in it, which he came about, was local, by change of place from earth to heaven; so when he comes again from heaven to earth, it will be local, by change of place, which his human nature is capable of.

2b. The place whither he shall come, is the earth; for, as Job says, he shall stand on the earth in the latter day; though he shall not descend upon it at once; when he appears from the third heaven, he shall descend into the air, and there stay some time, until the dead saints are raised, and the living ones changed; and both brought unto him there; and till the new earth is made and prepared for him and them; when he and they will come down from heaven to earth, and they shall reign with him on it a thousand years; and he shall reign before his ancients gloriously.

3. The visibility of Christ's personal appearance; he will appear in human nature, visible to all; the sign of the Son of man, that is, the Son of man himself, shall appear in heaven, in the air; and "every eye shall see him", all the inhabitants of the earth: such will be the agility of his glorious body, that he will swiftly move from one end of the heaven to the other, like lightning, to which his coming is compared, Matthew 24:27 so that he will be seen by all the tribes, kindreds, and nations of the earth: he

will be seen by all good men, by the living saints, that will be changed; by the dead, who will be raised, and both caught up together to meet him in the air; when he appears, they shall appear with him, and see him as he is: and he will be seen by them in the millennium state, and throughout the whole of it; for he will reign before his ancients, in the sight of them, in a glorious manner; and then, as Job says, when they shall both stand together upon the earth, in their flesh, and with their fleshly eyes shall they see God in human nature, and that for themselves, and not another: and he will be seen by bad men; by all the wicked living on earth, at his first appearance, who will wail and mourn because of him, fearing his wrath and vengeance they justly deserve; and when they, even the greatest personages among them, shall flee, and call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his face, terrible to them. And at the end of a thousand years, when they will be all raised, they will see him as their Judge on a throne of glory, and stand before him, small and great, and tremble at the sight of him, as the devils also will.

4. The glory of Christ's second coming. His first coming was in a very low, mean, and abject manner, without observation, pomp, and splendor; but his second coming will be in "great glory" (Matthew 24:30; Luke 9:26), and therefore is, with great propriety, called, "The glorious appearing of the great God!" (Titus 2:13).

4a. First, Christ will come in the "glory of his Father"; this is sometimes said alone, and when no mention is made of his own glory with it (Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38), the glory of the Father, and the glory of Christ, as the only begotten of the Father, are the same; the same is the glory of him that begot, and the glory of him that is begotten; Christ is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; having the same nature and perfections, and so the same glory, with which he shall now appear: or by his Father's glory may be meant, the glory he promised him in covenant, on doing the work of redemption and salvation of men, proposed to him, and to which he agreed; wherefore when he came the first time, when he had finished his work, he pleaded the promised reward (John 17:4, 5), and which promised glory took place, first upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead; for "God raised him from the dead, and gave him glory"; and at his ascension he "highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name"; and now by faith we see him "crowned with glory and honour!" and thus glorified, exalted, and crowned, will he come a second time. Besides, he will come as a Judge, to which office he is appointed by his Father; under whom, as such he will act; and will therefore come with a commission from him, and clothed with authority by him; for he hath "given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man"; that Son of man whom the Father has appointed to judge the world in righteousness; and so will come with the power, pomp, and majesty of a judge; and shall sit on a "throne of glory", with thousands and ten thousands ministering unto him, called "a great white throne"; "great", suitable to the greatness of his person and office; and "white", to denote the purity, uprightness, and righteousness of his proceedings.

4b. Secondly, he will come "in his own glory": this is sometimes also spoken of singly; and no mention made of his Father's glory (Matthew 25:31). And this his own glory, in which he will come, is twofold.

4b1. He will come in the glory of his divine nature, and the perfections of it, as a divine Person, as God over all. At first he came as a man; and because he appeared so mean, was taken by the Jews to be a mere man, as he still is by many; but when he comes a second time, his appearing will be the appearing of "the great God", the most high God; and so his coming is called, "the coming of the day of God" (Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:12; see Zech. 14:5), his divine perfections will be very illustriously displayed, particularly his omnipotence; upon his coming, voices will be heard in heaven, the church, loud proclamations made; "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" (Rev. 19:6), he will come "with power", with almighty power; which will appear by raising his dead saints, and changing his living ones; by burning the world, the heavens and the earth, and making all things new; by summoning all nations before him, setting them in their proper posture and distance, passing the decisive sentence, and carrying it into execution; especially on the wicked, who will be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:9). Also his omniscience will be clearly discerned; he will let all the churches, and all the world know, that he is he who searcheth the reins and hearts, and who needs no testimony from men; for he knows what is in men, and is done by them; for he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and every secret thing into judgment; and neither men nor things shall escape his all seeing eye. Likewise the glory of his holiness and justice will be very conspicuous; he will appear as the Judge of the whole earth, who will do right, and will truly claim the character of a "righteous Judge"; and his judgment be "righteous judgment"; and, as in all his other offices, so in the execution of this, "righteousness will be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins". There will be also large displays of grace and mercy, made at the appearance of Christ; hence saints are exhorted, "to hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto them, at the revelation of Jesus Christ"; and to "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life!" (1 Pet. 1:13; Jude 1:21; 2 Tim. 1:16,18).

4b2. Christ will come in the glory of his human nature. The apostle takes notice of this remarkable circumstance, which will attend the second coming and appearance of Christ, that it will be "without sin", the disgrace of human nature (Heb. 9:28). The human nature of Christ, when first assumed by him, was without sin, without original sin, the taint and contagion of corrupt nature, which is in all the ordinary descendants of Adam; hence it is called, the "holy thing"; and throughout his whole life it was free from all actual transgressions; no act of sin was ever committed by him: but then he was not without the appearance of sin; though his flesh was not sinful flesh, yet he was "sent in the likeness of sinful flesh"; being born of a sinful woman, brought up among sinful men, and conversed with some of the chief of them in life, and was numbered among transgressors at his death: and moreover, he had all the sins of his people imputed to him; he was made sin by imputation, who knew none: he bore all the sins of his people, and the punishment due to them, in his body

on the tree; but having thereby made satisfaction for them, upon his resurrection from the dead, he was discharged, acquitted, and justified: so that when he comes a second time, he will appear as without sin inherent in him he never had, and without sin done by him he never did; so without sin imputed to him, this being satisfied for by him, and he discharged from it. Likewise, whereas he bore our sorrows, and carried our griefs, and was attended with the sinless infirmities of our nature, and was at last crucified through weakness; now he will appear without any such; as hunger, thirst, weariness, and pain: and whereas, what with one thing and another, his visage was more marred than any man's, and his form than the sons of men; now his body is become a glorious one; of the glory of which his transfiguration on the Mount was an emblem, when his face did shine as the sun: and if the righteous, whose bodies will be fashioned like to Christ's glorious body, shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, with what luster and splendor will Christ appear in his glorified body?

4c. Thirdly, Christ will come in the glory of his holy angels; this circumstance is always observed in the account of his glorious coming. This will add to the glory and solemnity of the day. So kings, when they go abroad, are attended by their guards, not only for their safety, but for the glory of their majesty; and thus, when God descended on mount Sinai, to give the law to Israel, he came with ten thousand of his saints, his Holy Ones, the holy angels: and when Christ ascended on high, his chariots were twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; and when he shall descend from heaven, he will be revealed from thence with his mighty angels: nor will they be only used for the glory of his Majesty; but they will be employed by him in certain services; as to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, to bind the tares in bundles and east them into the furnace of fire; and, to collect together from the four winds, the saints raised from the dead, in the several parts of the world, and bring them to Christ, to meet him in the air, and come along with him.

5. The time of Christ's second coming and personal appearance, may next be inquired into; but to put a stop to inquiries of this kind, at least a boundary to them, it should be observed what our Lord says; "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels; but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36). Another evangelist has it; "Neither the Son", that is, as man; the human nature of Christ not being possessed of divine perfections, and so not of omniscience: to "know the times and seasons" of Christ's personal appearance and kingdom, is not for us; these the "Father has put in his own power", and keeps them secret there (Acts 1:6, 7). Some good men, in the last age, fixed the time of Christ's second coming, of his personal reign, and the millennium; in which being mistaken, it has brought the doctrine into disgrace, and great neglect: their mistake arose greatly from their confounding the spiritual and personal reign of Christ; as if they commenced together; namely, upon the destruction of antichrist, pope, and Turk; the calling of the Jews, and the large conversions of the Gentiles; whereas there is a distant space between the one and the other, and which is entirely unknown; the spiritual reign, indeed, will take place upon the above events, and there are dates given of them; namely, of the reign of antichrist, the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, the holy city being given to the

Gentiles to be trodden under foot, and the church in the wilderness; and the dates of these are the same, forty two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which are alike; for forty two months, reckoning thirty days in a month, as was the usual reckoning, are just one thousand two hundred and sixty days, and which design so many years; so that these things took place, go on, and will end together; (see Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6; 13:5). Now these dates are given to exercise the minds, the study, and diligence of men: and though men good and learned, have hitherto been mistaken in fixing the end of these dates, arising from the difficulty of knowing the time of their commencement, this should not discourage a modest and humble enquiry into them; for, for what end else are these dates given? could we find out the time when antichrist began his reign, the end of it could easily be fixed to a year. There is a hint given of his first appearance in (2 Thess. 2:6-8). "Now ye know, what withholdeth that he" (antichrist before described) "might be revealed in his time; for the mystery of iniquity doth already work"; it was not only in embryo, but was got to some size, and was busy and operative, though secret and hidden; "only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked one be revealed", the man of sin, or antichrist: now that which let, seems to be rightly interpreted by many, of the Roman emperor, who stood in the way of the bishop of Rome, appearing in that pomp and power he was thirsting after; and which seemed to bid fair to be fulfilling, when Augustulus, the last of the emperors, delivered up the empire to Odoacer, a king of the Goths; and the seat of the empire was removed from Rome to Ravenna, whereby way was made for the bishop of Rome to take his seat, and appear in the grandeur he was aiming at. Now this seemed to be a probable area to begin the reign of antichrist; and as this was in the year four hundred and seventy six, if one thousand two hundred and sixty years are added thereunto, the fall of antichrist must have happened in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty six; this some learned men were very confident of, particularly Lloyd, bishop of Worcester, a great calculator of times, affirmed, that all the devils in hell could not support the pope of Rome, longer than one thousand seven hundred and thirty six. But we have lived to see him mistaken; more than thirty years have since passed, yet the popish antichrist is still in his seat; though his civil power has been weakening, and still is weakening; so that it might be hoped, he will, ere long, come to his end. Nor should we be altogether discouraged from searching into the date of his reign: there is another zero which bids fair to be the beginning of it; and that is, when the emperor Phocas gave the grant of universal bishop to the pope of Rome; and this was done in the year six hundred and six: and the rather this date should be attended to, since within a little time after, Mahomet, the Eastern antichrist, arose; so that as they appeared about the same time, and go on together, they will end together. Now if to the above date are added one thousand two hundred and sixty years, the end of antichrist's reign will fall in the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty six: according to this computation, antichrist has almost an hundred years more to reign: and if the date of his reign is to be taken from his arriving to a greater degree of pride and power, or from the year six hundred and sixty six, which is the number of the beast (Rev. 13:18), it will be protracted still longer. It may be observed, that the dates in Daniel 12:11, 12 and in the Revelation, somewhat differ; they are larger in the former; instead of one

thousand two hundred and sixty days, as in the latter, it is one thousand two hundred and ninety days; thirty days, that is, thirty years, more; which, after the fall of antichrist, may be taken up in the conversion of the Jews, and the settlement of them in their own land: and the date is still further increased in the next verse; "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and thirty five days"; which make forty five days, or years, more; and which may be employed in the destruction of the Ottoman empire; and in the spread of the gospel through the whole world; and therefore happy will he be that comes to this date; these will be happy, halcyon days indeed! But now supposing these dates could be settled with any precision, as they cannot, until more light is thrown upon them, which perhaps may be, when nearer their accomplishment; yet the time of the second coming, and personal appearance of Christ, and of the millennium, or thousand years reign upon it, cannot be known hereby; because the spiritual reign of Christ, will only take place upon the above events; and how long that will last, none can say: nor have we any chronological dates, nor hints, concerning the duration of it; only the Philadelphian church state, in which it will be; but as that is not yet begun, so neither do we know when it will; nor when it will end: and after that, there will be another state of lukewarmness, drowsiness, and carnal security; which the Laodicean church state will bring on, and will continue till Christ's personal appearance; for such will be the state of things when the Son of man comes; which will be like the times of Noah and Lot; and how long this state will last cannot be said; unless the "seven months", allowed for the burial of Gog and his multitude (Ezek. 39:12), can be thought to be the duration of this state {1}; which, if understood of prophetic time, takes in a compass of two hundred and ten years; but this is uncertain. So that it seems impracticable and impossible, to know the time of the second coming of Christ; and therefore it must be vain and needless, if not criminal, to inquire into it. However, it is known to God, who has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by Christ; and as there was a set time for his first coming into the world, so there is for his second coming; and God in his own appointed time will send him, show him, and set him forth. And it is often said by our Lord in the book of the Revelation, that he would "come quickly" (Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20) to quicken saints to an expectation of it; and yet it is seemingly deferred, to try the faith and patience of saints, and to render the wicked inexcusable: but the chief reason is what the apostle gives (2 Pet. 3:9), that "the Lord is long suffering to us-ward", the beloved of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:8), the elect of God he wrote unto; "not willing that any" of those his beloved and chosen ones "should but that all should come to repentance"; and when they are all brought to repentance towards God, and to faith in Christ, he will stay no longer, "but the day of the Lord will come" immediately.

6. The signs of Christ's appearance and kingdom. The more remote ones are such as Christ gives in answer to the question of the apostles to him; "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" whether they meant his second coming, or his coming to destroy Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish world, church and state, Christ gave them signs which answer to both; the destruction of Jerusalem being a presage and emblem of the destruction of the world at the second coming of

Christ; such as wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes; persecutions of good men, false teachers, the preaching of the gospel throughout the world: all which had an accomplishment before the coming of Christ to destroy Jerusalem: and they have been fulfilling again and again in all ages since; and perhaps will be more frequent before the destruction of the world at the second coming of Christ. The more near signs, or what will more nearly precede Christ's second and personal coming, are the spiritual reigns, and what will introduce that? the destruction of antichrist, the call of the Jews, and numerous conversions of Gentiles, through the general spread of the gospel; and after that, great coolness and indifference in religion, and great defection in faith and practice. But after all, it seems as if there would be an uncertainty of it until the sign of the Son of man, which is himself, as before observed, appears in the heavens; for the Son of man will come in an hour unthought of by good men; and as a thief in the night to wicked men; suddenly and at an unawares; and to both wise and foolish professors, while they are slumbering and sleeping.

7. The ends to be answered by the second and personal coming of Christ.

7a. The putting of the saints into the full possession of salvation (Heb. 9:28). Christ's first coming into the world was to work out the salvation of his people; this he has obtained, he is become the author of it, and which is published in the gospel; and an application of it is made to particular persons, by the Spirit of God, at conversion: but the full enjoyment of it is yet to come (Rom. 13:11), to which saints are kept by the power of God; and of which they are now heirs, and when Christ shall appear he will put them into the possession of their inheritance (Matthew 25:34).

7b. The destruction of all his and our enemies; all wicked men, the beast and false prophet, and Satan, who will be cast by Christ into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; even all those who would not have him to reign over them: and by all this, the ultimate end of all, the glory of God; will be answered; the glory of his divine perfections, in the salvation of his people, and in the destruction of the wicked; and the glorification of Christ in all them that believe (2 Thess. 1:10).

{1} See Rudd's Essay on the Millennium, p. 16, 363.