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[No. 29.]

ON THE  
SECOND COMING OF THE LORD,  
AND  
THE DESCENT OF THE  
NEW JERUSALEM.

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I. *On the opinions which have been entertained on this subject.*

THE same evangelic history which relates the life on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and which closes with an account of His triumphant ascension into heaven, frequently intimates that He would come a second time, in a more glorious manner than when He made His First Advent among the shepherds of Bethlehem. And one of the most striking of these intimations is contained in the words of the Lord, as recorded in the 24th chapter of Matthew, from the 29th to the 34th verse: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and THEY SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when the branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. *Verily, I say unto you,*

*That this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*" This passage is the foundation of nearly all the views that have been entertained in the Christian Church, relative to the Second Advent of the Lord, however discordant, at first sight, such views may appear. In the Apostolic age, and for nearly the two following centuries, there was a general expectation and hope, that this prophecy would receive a literal and speedy accomplishment. And it is tolerably certain, from their own words, that the Apostles themselves expected to be the witnesses of this event. The Apostle Paul paraphrases these words in his Epistles to the Thessalonians, and he alludes to them in his Epistles to the Corinthians. To the Thessalonians, he says, in allusion to the fears which they had expressed, lest their departed friends should not share with them in this expected triumph,—“This we say unto you by the word of the Lord,” (that is, on the authority of the Lord’s words,) “that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them that are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first,”—or “before,” as the Greek word signifies, —(that is, before this expected event): “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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (I. Ep. iv. 15—18.) In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle refers to the “angels with a great sound of a trumpet;” for he says, “Behold I shew you a mystery,”—that is, I offer you my explanation of a hidden truth;—“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trump*, for the *trumpet shall sound*, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (xv. 51, 52.) Now it is quite certain from the whole tenor of the apostolic writings, that the apostles did not use these and similar expressions *prophetically*, but as *their application of*