



The Manner of Our Lord's Return

Chapter 1

ACCORDING to creedal views, our Lord Jesus is to return visibly to the physical eyes of mankind, riding upon a literal cloud, blowing a literal trumpet, shining with a dazzling literal light and blasting the literal universe into atoms. Usually this view of the manner of His Return, His Second Advent, is presented to frighten people into repentance, but upon a close examination in the light of the Bible, reason and facts, it is found in many respects to contradict these. So far as a Scriptural basis for this view is concerned, it rests entirely upon erroneous principles of interpretation; for it is drawn from a literal interpretation of figurative passages, such as parables, symbols and dark sayings, which according to the rules of language must, of course, be interpreted figuratively.

Not only does this view rest upon a wrong method of interpretation, but upon logical analysis its unreasonableness becomes apparent. For example, in view of the roundness of the earth, how could the people at the antipodes of the place of His arrival see Him coming? Even if, as has been suggested, He would after His coming remain stationary at a certain place in the sky during 24 hours for the rotation of the earth on its axis to make Him visible around the earth eastward and westward, the rotundity of the earth would nevertheless make Him invisible beyond a few hundred miles northward and southward. Clouds forming within the earth's atmosphere, and the earth's rotundity, as well as its size, would make Him invisible at no great distance. A literal trumpet, blowing loud enough to be heard all over the earth, would burst the eardrums of all within at least 12,000 miles of it.

And even if these difficulties would be overcome in some manner so that all on earth would *e.g.*, by television, see Jesus in His Second Advent simultaneously with their physical sight and hear the literal trumpet without injury to their ears, it would still be unreasonable to expect Jesus in His glorious spirit body to appear to mankind's physical eyes; for if the light from the glorious spirit body of Christ would appear to the physical eyes of mankind, they would be instantly blinded, as was Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:3-18); but if they should see that body itself, they would instantly drop dead, as no human can see God and/or Christ and live (Ex. 33:20; Heb. 1:3; 1 Tim. 6:16).

And if the literal universe were meant in the Bible passage that speaks of the heavens and earth passing from His face (Rev. 20:11), it would have passed away long ago, yes, at the instant of its creation, for He faces all things. Thus proper methods of interpreting the Bible, as well as reason and facts, contradict the idea that our Lord Jesus in His Return, His Second Advent, appears to mankind's natural sight in a visible manner.

In recent years many Evangelical and Fundamentalist Bible scholars, among others, have given up the abovementioned creedal view of Jesus' arrival in His Second Advent. Instead, they agree that at Jesus' arrival and for some time afterward, He will not be visible to mankind's physical

eyes. This is commendable, but they do not go far enough, for a candid, reverent and careful study of the Scriptures reveals the fact that our Lord in His entire Second Advent is to be invisible to mankind's physical sight, but visible to their mental sight, their eyes of understanding (Matt. 13:13-17). We will now present nine additional lines of pertinent Biblical evidence proving this point.

DIRECT STATEMENTS OF THE BIBLE

Our second line of Biblical evidence is: The Bible directly teaches that Jesus will no more be seen by *the physical eyes of human beings*. "Yet a little while, and *the world seeth me no more*" (John 14:19). This statement of our Lord is clearly to the point. While the connection shows that the Lord's Church would see our Lord when changed with Him (1 John 3:2), John 14:19 clearly teaches that no others of mankind would see Him. Of course Jesus there referred to Himself as being forever invisible to mankind's physical eyes in His glorious resurrection body.

This is clearly shown to be the case by the language of the Apostle Paul with reference to Jesus since He ascended to be with God in glory: "who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom [in His glorious condition] no man *hath seen, nor can see*" (1 Tim. 6:16). Very clearly do these passages show that our Lord since His glorification has been and forever will be invisible to mankind's physical sight. Therefore at our Lord's Return, He is invisible to their physical eyes.

"AS A THIEF IN THE NIGHT"

The same thought is implied in the Scriptures which teach that our Lord's Return would be thief-like in its manner (1 Thes. 5:1-6; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15). When a thief comes to break into a house, does he carry a bright light and blow a trumpet, shouting to the people, "Hello, you people! Wake up! I am coming to rob your houses"? Of course we know he does no such things. Neither, therefore, does our Lord when He returns as a thief in the night. The thief in the night comes silently, stealthily, hiding in the dark, walking noiselessly with padded shoes or in stocking feet, picking locks and opening doors or windows with quiet deftness, thus concealing his presence from his unsuspecting victims.

Our Lord in the first part of His Second Advent comes in a similar manner, unknown to the world. But as a thief's presence in the house that is being robbed may by certain signs be made known to his accomplices who may be awaiting him in or at that particular house, so the Lord promised to make known, after His Return, to His faithful watching people, the fact of His Return by certain signs and proofs (Matt. 24:3, 30-33).

Note how 1 Thes. 5:1-6 tells us that the world would not be aware of our Lord's Return, because of its thief-like manner, but that His waking and watchful people would be aware of it. Of course, if the world would see His Return with their physical eyes, they would be aware of it. So their not being aware of it proves that they would not see Him physically in His Second Advent, which therefore must be invisible to physical sight.

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS IN YOUR MIDST"

The invisibility of the heavenly phase (Jesus and the Church) of God's Millennial Kingdom also implies that our Lord's Return would be invisible to mankind's physical eyes; because He is a part of that Kingdom, yes, its chief part, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We have already proven (see our Kingdom of God booklet; a copy free on request) that the Kingdom of God would in its glorified condition and heavenly phase consist of Jesus and His faithful spiritual elect followers, and would be invisible to mankind's physical eyes.

Jesus expressly says that the people will not be able to point out the Kingdom of God—Himself and His faithful disciples—because they will not be subject to people's physical sight, even as we read in Luke 17:20, 21:

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [mankind will not be able to see Christ and His Body members when They come to rule]: neither *shall* they say, Lo here [look, here is the Kingdom, Jesus and the Church]! or, lo there [is the Kingdom, Jesus and the Church]; for, behold, the kingdom of God [which you will be unable to point out] is [shall be] in the midst of you [ASV, margin; so it must be physically invisible, if it cannot be shown to people's physical sight; the KJV translation 'within you' is manifestly incorrect, for surely God's Kingdom was not within the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking, though He and His faithful disciples, prospective future Kings and Priests in God's Kingdom, were in their midst]." The Kingdom of God therefore being invisible to mankind's physical eyes, and Jesus being a part of that Kingdom, He must be invisible to mankind's physical eyes when He returns to establish it.

"AS WERE THE DAYS OF NOAH"

In Matt. 24:37-39 Jesus gives a strong proof of the fact that mankind would not physically see Him in His Second Advent: "As were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming [Greek, *parousia*, *presence*, margin] of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ... and they *knew not* until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming [Greek, *parousia*, *presence*, margin] of the Son of man" (ASV). In this passage Jesus shows that the people in their *acts* and in their *ignorance* of the impending trouble just before the flood and during His own Second Presence just before the Great Tribulation would be alike.

As in the days of Noah before the flood, the people were engaged in the ordinary activities of social life, but because of unbelief in the preaching of a coming flood were *ignorant* of its impendency, so during Christ's Second Presence just before the Great Tribulation would burst upon the world, the people would engage in the ordinary activities of social life, *entirely ignorant* of the coming tribulation because disbelieving the testimony respecting it and its cause, Christ's Second Presence. That among other things in these verses the time of Noah's presence before the flood is compared with the time of Christ's Second Presence before the Great Tribulation, is manifest also from Luke 17:26:

"And as it was *in the days* of Noah, so shall it be also *in the days* of the Son of man." Here the expression "*in the days of the Son of man*," a certain period of His Second Advent, is used as the

parallel of the expression "the presence of the Son of man" in Matt. 24:37, which proves that the passage compares the periods to which it refers. See also Luke 17:28-30. How, we ask, can it be that Jesus could be present and yet the people in general would be ignorant of this fact, as well as of the Time of Trouble coming? If they would be able physically to see Him, of course they would know of His Presence and would expect the trouble to follow. The fact of their ignorance of His Presence necessarily implies that He would be hidden from their physical eyes, and so His Return must be invisible to their physical eyes.

"AS THE LIGHTNING ... OUT OF THE EAST"

A sixth consideration proves the same thing: Jesus declares that as the natural sun manifests its presence by the natural light which it gives out, so He would manifest His Second Presence by the symbolic light, Truth, that He would at that time give out. This is Jesus' statement of the case in Matt. 24:27 (see also Luke 17:24, where again the words "in his day" are paralleled with the expression "coming"—Greek, *presence*—in Matt. 24:27), though an unhappy translation of the Greek word *astrape* by "lightning" instead of "bright shining" (Luke 11:36) veils the thought of the passage: "For as the lightning [*bright shining*—the sun] cometh forth from the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall be the presence [margin] of the Son of man" (ASV).

It is not, as the translation suggests, a peculiarity of the lightning to come out of the east and flash even to the west, for it more frequently comes from other directions and usually flashes over only a part of the heavens and that often in other directions than the west. But it is a peculiarity of the sunlight to always come from the east and shine even to the west. These facts show that in this passage, as in Luke 11:36, the Greek word *astrape* should be rendered "bright shining" or "light"; for manifestly in the latter passage the word "lightning" would be an improper translation; for we do not catch lightning and put it on a candlestick!

Understanding our Lord in Matt. 24:27 to refer to the bright shining of the sun, we can readily see the comparison that He makes: that as the sun manifests its presence gradually and that to some sooner than to others and finally before reaching the west, even to the latest sleepers; so our Lord manifests His Presence by the light of Truth that He as the Sun of Righteousness emits (Mal. 4:2), first shining upon His watchful and early-awake Church (Isa. 60:1, 2) and then later upon the whole world (Isa. 60:3; John 1:9). Matt. 24:27 therefore implies that men will recognize our Lord's presence, not by natural sight, but by their eyes of understanding, recognizing Him as present by the light of Truth that He sheds upon them. Therefore this passage implies that His Return is invisible to mankind's physical eyes.

"EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM"

The invisibility of our Lord to men's physical eyes at His Return is implied also by the passages which show us that all mankind, including Israel, will see the Lord in His Second Advent, when such passages are harmonized with those which teach that in His present condition no man hath seen nor can see Him (1 Tim. 6:16), and that after His glorification the world no more would see Him (John 14:19).

Rev. 1:7 (compare Zech. 12:10), referring to our Lord's Second Advent, reads as follows: "Behold, he cometh with clouds [of trouble in the Great Tribulation]; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." If we would interpret the "clouds" of this passage literally we would make the passage teach nonsense, as we showed above; and if we would interpret the expression "every eye" in this passage as applying to literal, physical eyes we would make it contradict 1 Tim. 6:16 and John 14:19. It goes without saying that reverence for God's Word should withhold us from interpreting Scriptures contradictorily of one another.

How may we interpret this and similar passages and preserve the harmony of the Bible? We answer, evidently 1 Tim. 6:16 and John 14:19 are literal and refer to literal sight; hence the eyes of Rev. 1:7 and the looking of Zech 12:10 must be figurative and refer to mental sight—with the eyes of understanding. Evidently these verses, therefore, mean that our Lord's Second Presence will be accompanied with clouds of trouble and that the eyes of understanding in all people, including the Jews, will be opened to a proper knowledge of Him, as Savior, Messiah and Lord. In this sense of seeing, the Apostle Paul says, "We see Jesus" (Heb. 2:9). Certainly he does not mean that we see Him with our physical eyes, but rather with our eyes of understanding, our mental eyes.

Not only the reasonableness of the above interpretation, and the Scriptural usage in other passages, but also the character of the book of Revelation warrants it. Rev. 1:1 shows that it is a book of symbols: "He sent and signified (*signified*) it"—gave it in signs or symbols.

Therefore it would be natural to interpret the *clouds*, *eye* and *seeing* of Rev. 1:7 and the *looking* of Zech. 12:10 symbolically. The reference made in these passages to the Jews who pierced Him as seeing Him clinches the matter; for Jesus told them on the Wednesday before His crucifixion, hence two days before the Jews last saw Him with their physical eyes, that they would *no more* see Him until at His Second Advent they would hail Him with the acclamation, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39; compare Zech. 12:10). This passage proves that the natural sight is not meant here, because they saw Him with their natural eyes two days after He uttered these words, that is, on the day of His crucifixion. Therefore mental sight is here meant, and this shows how those who pierced Him would see Him during His Second Advent, *i.e.*, not with their physical eyes, but with their mental eyes.

We further know this because Jesus two days before, *i.e.*, on the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem four days before His death, had pronounced mental blindness upon them for their sins (Luke 19:42, 44), and the Apostle Paul assured us that such blindness would continue with them until the full number of the Gentile elect would be won (Rom. 11:7-10, 25-33). Then, at the Second Advent, it would gradually be removed. When the final phase of trouble comes upon the regathered Jewish nation, as described in Ezek. 38; 39; Zech. 14:1-3, they through this great cloud of trouble will come to see by mental sight (just as Christians now do—Gal. 3:1; Heb. 2:9), that Jesus is indeed their Divine Savior, Messiah and Lord (Zech. 12:9, 10). This will be the time of Israel's national conversion.

A passage very similar in sense and method of interpretation to Rev. 1:7 and Zech. 12:10 is Matt. 26:64. These passages from the standpoint above presented harmonize with the clear statements of 1 Tim. 6:16 and John 14:19, and, so viewed, prove that our Lord's Return would be invisible to mankind's physical eyes, though discernible by their mental eyes.

"IN LIKE MANNER"

We examine as an eighth proof of the invisibility of our Lord's Second Advent to mankind's physical eyes, one of the most misused passages of the Bible on the manner of our Lord's Return—Acts 1:11: "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."

This passage is usually explained as though it read, "as ye have *seen* him go into heaven, so shall ye *see* him come again." Those who so interpret the passage explain it as though the point of comparison emphasized in the passage were His being *seen* going and His being *seen* coming again, whereas the passage says nothing whatever about His being *seen* coming again. Therefore His being *seen* coming again cannot be a part of the point of comparison in this passage.

Clearly the point of comparison in this passage is between the *manner* of His going and the *manner* of His coming again, and not between His being *seen* going and His being *seen* coming again: "This same Jesus ... shall so come *in like manner* as ye have seen him go into heaven." Hence this passage treats of the manner of our Lord's Return.

And from the manner in which Jesus went we can learn some things respecting the manner of His Return: (1) He went secretly so far as the world was concerned, none but His disciples knowing of it at the time; so He comes again secretly ("as a thief in the night") so far as the world is concerned, none but His faithful people knowing of it in its first stages; (2) He went away quietly and unostentatiously, without startling the world with a literal trumpet, riding on a literal cloud, shining with a dazzling natural light and blasting the universe into atoms; therefore He returns quietly and unostentatiously, without startling the world with a literal trumpet, riding on a literal cloud, shining with a dazzling natural light and blasting the universe into atoms; (3) He went away blessing those whom He left; therefore He returns, blessing first His waiting Church and later the world of mankind; and (4) as touching His Divine body He was invisible to the physical eyes of humans after dematerializing though manifest to His disciples thereafter, by great works, *e.g.*, at Pentecost; hence on returning He is invisible to mankind's physical eyes, though He is manifested as present by great accompanying works.

After our tenth line of evidence has been presented, this fourth point will become clearer. We introduce it here, because it logically belongs here among the other points of comparison, though certain explanations given under that tenth line are needed to clarify it from certain objections based on a misunderstanding of the nature of our Lord's glorious resurrection body. The passage under study proves that the manner of His coming again is like the manner of His going away, and as such disproves many crude errors on the manner of His Return, as well as proves its invisibility to mankind's physical eyes.

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S LOGICAL ARGUMENT

The Apostle Paul uses in 2 Thes. 2:1-9 an argument which from a proper understanding of the subject clearly and pointedly proves that Christ's Return had not yet set in; but this argument would be decidedly clumsy and without directness, were His Return to be visible to mankind's physical eyes. He did not appeal to the sense of sight, but to certain *predicted* but *unfulfilled* signs that must *precede* the Second Advent; for he told the Thessalonians (2 Thes. 2:3-9) that our Lord's Return could not set in until Antichrist would arise in, out of, and through a falling away from the true faith and practice of Christianity, gain supreme power, accomplish its dread reign, and be revealed and consumed in its main teachings and powers. Thereafter Christ would come again and annihilate Antichrist.

Since the falling away was at most only in its earliest start when the Apostle wrote these words, many features of the falling away, as well as all of the taking away of the hindering thing, Antichrist's birth, rise to power, withering reign, revelation and consuming, were future. Hence Christ's Second Advent not setting in until after all of these things would happen, it could not have set in before they began to come to pass.

Thus the Apostle's appeal to the unfulfilled prophetic signs which must precede Christ's Second Advent, both proved that our Lord was not present at that time, and was certainly a cogent, direct and clear proof of Paul's contention in view of the thought of our Lord's invisibility at His Return, while it would have been clumsy, very indirect and decidedly weak in contrast with the argument that our Lord would be visible to the physical eyes of all mankind at His Return, if His Return were to be in manner as creeds of the Dark Ages teach.

The Apostle's argument in its nature and use therefore implies that our Lord's Return would be physically invisible, even as he had taught the Thessalonians; while had he taught them a physically visible return of our Lord, the Thessalonians, not seeing Him and the supposed accompanying literalities, would never have fallen into the error that Christ's Second Advent had set in at that time. In other words, the error into which the Thessalonians fell and the Apostle's method of argumentation in refuting that error, clearly imply that he and they believed that our Lord would be invisible to human eyes at His Return; for otherwise how could they have believed Him to have come again without seeing Him?

Chapter 2

JESUS NOW A SPIRIT BEING

We will now give the basic reason, our tenth line of Scriptural evidence, proving that our Lord's Return is invisible to men's physical sight, though visible to their mental eyes. This basic reason is that *our Lord since His resurrection is no more a human, but is a spirit being, of necessity having, as such, a body that is invisible to mankind's physical sight.* Hence the manner of His Coming must be invisible.

We will now proceed to present twelve lines of evidence of this fact from the Bible, offering Bible passages and doctrines to establish this truth.

DIRECT BIBLE STATEMENTS

(a) *God directly tells us that Jesus is now a spirit being.* Among other places this is stated in 1 Cor. 15:45: "The first man Adam [Gen. 2:7] was made a living soul [a human being with a human body]; the last [Jesus, the Second (v. 47)] Adam was made a quickening [life-giving] *spirit*." Therefore as the Adam of the Garden of Eden was made a human being, so the Adam of heaven [Jesus in His resurrection] was made a spirit being.

In v. 46 Paul expressly tells us that the Adam of the Garden of Eden was not a spirit, but a human being; and that the later Adam, our Lord, is a spirit being. The Apostle proves this by showing in v. 47 that the first Adam had a body made "of the earth," of material substances, while the Second Adam, our Lord, had a body "from heaven," of spiritual substances.

In the Greek of v. 47 the expression translated "of the" in the phrase "of the earth" is the same as that translated "from" in the phrase "from heaven." In both cases the substances from which the bodies were formed are meant. These three verses (1 Cor. 15:45-47) by their direct statements and by their contrasts of the two Adams, as well as their bodies and the substances from which they were made, prove that our Lord was raised from the dead a spirit being with a spirit body, and not a human being with a human body.

Further, our Lord Jesus is in 2 Cor. 3:17 again directly called a spirit: "Now the Lord is that spirit."

The Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 5:16 writes: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now [and] henceforth know we him [so] no more." He no more knew Christ as a human being, "according to the flesh," though the disciples had once known Him as such before our Lord's death. This verse therefore implies that Jesus was no more a human being when Paul used this language of Him, though He had previously been a human being. The reason for the change was that when our Lord was resurrected He was raised from the dead a spirit being, and not a human being.

1 Pet. 3:18 is strongly to the point when it says of Jesus' death and resurrection, "being put to death *in the flesh*, but made alive [not "*in the flesh*," be it noted, but] *in the spirit*" (ASV). Let the reader particularly note the contrast as given in this verse between that in which He was put to death and that in which He was made alive. According to creedal theology, which teaches that our Lord was raised from the dead a human and not a spirit being, this verse should read, "Being put to death *in the flesh*, and made alive *in the flesh*." But God, who cannot lie, declares the exact opposite, saying, "Being put to death *in the flesh*, but made *alive in the spirit*." The article "the" is not found in the Greek before the words for *flesh* and *spirit*: "put to death in flesh, but made alive in spirit" is the literal rendering from the Greek. Therefore our Lord is now a spirit.

The four passages just quoted and briefly explained demonstrate that our Lord since His resurrection is no more a human being but is a spirit being, and that, according to other passages, of the Divine nature, the highest of all spirit natures. If He is a spirit being, He of necessity is invisible to mankind's physical sight, and therefore His Second Coming must be invisible to physical sight in its manner.

JESUS' JOINT-HEIRS TO BE SPIRIT BEINGS

(b) Not only do the Scriptures directly teach that our Lord since His resurrection is no longer a human, but is a spirit being; *they also teach it by necessary inference in declaring that the Body members in their resurrection would have spirit bodies, and that they thereby would have bodies like His body*. Therefore His body must be a spirit body. That the Body members were promised spirit bodies we see from 1 Cor. 15:42, 44: "So also is *the* resurrection of *the* dead [the article *the* in both cases is emphatic in the Greek, meaning the special resurrection, the First Resurrection (Rev. 20:4, 6)]. It is sown in corruption [material beings, of flesh, bones, blood, *etc.*, are corruptible]; it is raised in incorruption [spirit beings are incorruptible, made of spiritual substances, like fire, lightning, *etc.*]. It is sown a natural [material, earthly] body; it is raised a spiritual [immaterial, heavenly] body." This passage proves that the spiritual elect receive spirit bodies, and thus are spirit beings in the resurrection, as during their earthly lifetime they have had human bodies, and therefore have been human beings.

The same thought, that of the Body members being changed from human to spirit beings in the resurrection, is expressed in 1 Cor. 15:51-54: "We shall all be *changed* [in nature], in a moment ... for the trumpet shall sound, and *the* [emphatic in the Greek] dead [the Body members, who are the pre-eminent dead] shall be raised incorruptible [not in bodies made of flesh, blood, bones, *etc.* (v. 50)—which would be corruptible, because made of material or earthly substances—but in spiritual bodies, which are incorruptible, because made of spiritual or heavenly substances, such as fire, electricity, *etc.*], and we shall be changed. For this corruptible [person] must put on incorruption [by gaining a spiritual, heavenly body] and this mortal [person] must put on immortality [by gaining a spiritual body of the highest of all spiritual natures, the Divine]."

But the Scriptures clearly teach also that the bodies which the Body members would have in the resurrection are just like Jesus' resurrection body. If this can be proven, it would follow that Jesus at His resurrection received a spirit body, and hence is no more a human, but a spirit being.

Quite a number of Scriptures prove this. *E.g.*, 1 John 3:2: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"—not as He *was*; for if they were to become like Him as *He was* while in the flesh (Heb. 5:7), it would already have appeared what they would be like in their resurrection bodies.

Also, 1 Cor. 15:48, 49 conveys the same thought: "As is [*was*; the words *is* and *are* throughout verse 48 are or should be in *italics*, which means that they were supplied by the translators, without any corresponding words in the original Greek; that the word "was" should have been supplied here is evident from the fact that Adam is here meant] the earthy [one, Adam], such are [will be] they also that are [will be] earthy [the world, apart from the elect, in the resurrection]; and as is the heavenly [One, Jesus in His resurrection body], such are [*will be*; this promise was made to the spiritual elect, selected during the Gospel Age] they also that are [will be] heavenly [in their resurrection bodies]. And as we [the spiritual elect, selected during the Gospel Age] have borne the image of the earthy [one, Adam, *i.e.*, as surely as they have had bodies like Adam's, 'of the earth earthy'], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [One, Jesus, *i.e.*, so surely do they in the resurrection receive bodies like Jesus' resurrection body]."

A similar thought is taught in Phil 3:21. Thus these verses prove the thought that the saints in their spirit bodies, gained in the resurrection, would have bodies like our Lord's resurrection body. But since the spiritual elect are promised spirit bodies in the resurrection, Jesus must have a spirit body in His resurrection. Therefore His resurrection body must be invisible to mankind's physical eyes, and so His body at His Return must be invisible to them.

JESUS' INHERITING THE KINGDOM PROVES THAT HE IS NOW A SPIRIT BEING

(c) That Jesus since His resurrection is a spirit being and therefore invisible to mankind's physical sight at His Return is evident from a third line of thought. *He has inherited the kingdom of heaven, which a human being cannot inherit, unless he gives up his humanity and becomes a spirit being.* The Apostle Paul assures us in 1 Cor. 15:50 that "flesh and blood [a human being as such—Heb. 2:14; Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:16—with bones, teeth, fingernails, *etc.*] cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption [material bodies are not made into spiritual bodies]." Accordingly, fleshly bodies will never be transubstantiated and thus be taken to heaven. To gain a heavenly resurrection one must be "changed," as Paul clearly teaches (1 Cor. 15:50-54)—from human nature to a spirit nature, but not by his body being converted into that of another nature.

This is also Jesus' teaching in His disclosure to Nicodemus (John 3:5-8): "Except a man be born of water [the Truth] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God [the Body members' Spirit-begetting through the Word would introduce them into the embryo or militant phase of the Kingdom of heaven, whereby they would become new creatures in Christ (1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Cor. 5:17) and candidates for membership in the born or glorified phase of the Kingdom of heaven (Jas. 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:3-6); their birth of the Spirit would introduce them into the born or glorified phase of God's Kingdom beyond the veil]. That which is born of the flesh [of a human being] is flesh [a human being]; and that which is born of the Spirit is [a]

spirit [a spirit being, which one must become to enter the glorified phase of the Kingdom of heaven, as Jesus says in v. 3]. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again [*from above*, margin]. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but [because it is invisible] canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so [invisible as the wind, yet powerful] is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The surest proof that one is not born of the Spirit in the earthly lifetime is the fact, suggested by this verse, that his coming and going now can be seen; but when he is born of the Spirit he can come and go like the wind, physically invisible to mankind. The Scriptures teach that to enter the glorified condition of the Kingdom, one must undergo a change of nature from the human to the spirit nature—a re-creation, which like any other birth begins with a begetting, proceeds through a quickening, a growth, a strengthening, a balancing and a perfecting, and is completed by a birth as a spirit being, as we have clearly shown in our "Born Again" booklet (a copy free on request). Jesus shows in John 3:6 that by the birth of the Spirit His Church became spirits, and He assures them in v. 8 that as spirits they will be invisible. Jesus, of course, as the chief one in the Kingdom of heaven has inherited it, has entered it, which implies that He is no longer a human, but a spirit being (1 Cor. 15:50; John 3:6), which He became at His resurrection (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; Heb. 1:3-5; Acts 13:33); and therefore He is physically invisible and His Return must therefore be invisible to mankind's physical eyes.

JESUS HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS

(d) A fourth consideration proves that our Lord is no longer a human being but since His resurrection is a spirit being: *the fact that He is now higher than the angels*. While He was in the flesh He was lower than the angels, even as the Apostle Paul declares, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels [which in v. 7 he says is an essential attribute of human nature] for the suffering of death" (Heb. 2:9).

Thus as long as Jesus was in the flesh, *i.e.*, while He was a human being, which He no more is according to this passage, He was a little lower than the angels. But the Bible clearly teaches that since His resurrection He is far higher than the angels, and as such is the exact image of the Father's person—a Divine being (Heb. 1:3-5; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11). Therefore, as the exact image of the Father's person, He is since His resurrection a spirit being (John 4:24). Jesus now being far higher than the angels, of the Divine nature, as a spirit must be invisible, and so His Second Coming is invisible to mankind's physical eyes.

JESUS BECAME HUMAN ONLY TO RANSOM US

(e) *Jesus became human only in order that He might die as our Ransom*, as the Apostle Paul teaches, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels [which vs. 6 and 7 teach means that He was made a human being—John 1:14] *for the suffering of death* ... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Having by His death fulfilled the purpose for which He became a human being, He had therefore no more need of human nature for Himself than He had need of it while He was with the Father during the Ages before He became flesh. Hence there being no need of His having human nature for Himself after His death, we may be sure that He no longer has it; for He has in His person nothing that He does not need.

This, therefore, implies that He is now a spirit being and as such must be physically invisible. Accordingly, His Return must be invisible to mankind's physical eyes.

JESUS NOT ETERNALLY DEGRADED

(f) *Our Lord would be eternally degraded in nature had He taken back His humanity when He rose from the dead.* That He was lowered in nature, though not in character—when He gave up His prehuman nature (in which He was, as the One next to Father, higher than the angels), in exchange for the human nature, is evident from the Apostle Paul's statement that when Jesus became a human being He was "made a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9; see also John 1:14; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14, 16-18).

If He had taken back His humanity in His resurrection, and would now and to all eternity retain it, He would thereby be everlastingly lower than the angels in nature and thereby be eternally degraded in nature. But such a degradation is untrue, because the Scriptures clearly teach that instead of His now being lower than the angels, He is highly exalted above them (Heb. 1:3-5; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5:11-13). Therefore He did not take back His humanity in His resurrection. Accordingly, He must be a spirit being, and therefore invisible to human eyes at His Return.

JESUS DID NOT TAKE BACK THE RANSOM

(g) A seventh consideration proves that our Lord is no longer human, that He did not take again the human nature but received a spirit nature at His resurrection. It is *the Ransom doctrine, the basic doctrine of the Bible*. The Scriptures teach that He gave up His humanity as our Ransom-price (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; John 6:51). Had He taken back His humanity, His flesh, when He arose from the dead, He would have taken back the Ransom-price and thus vitiated His entire redemptive work, left us in irretrievable ruin and made the entire Plan of God a failure! Merely to state these inevitable results of taking back the Ransom-price is to demonstrate the falsity of the doctrine that our Lord arose from the dead a human being and the truth of the doctrine that He arose from the dead a spirit being. Therefore He is now and always will be invisible to mankind's physical eyes; and therefore His Return must be invisible to their physical sight.

PERFECTION OF GOD'S CHARACTER A PROOF

(h) An eighth line of thought demonstrates that our Lord at His resurrection did not take again human, but a spirit nature: *the perfection of God's character*. We showed under the sixth point that if our Lord had at His resurrection taken back His human nature He would forever be degraded in nature, *whereas the Scriptures cited under the sixth point prove that instead of His being forever degraded in nature He has been exalted in nature above all angelic natures*. Since God raised Him from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34; 17:31; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; Heb. 13:20), if He had resurrected Him in the human nature, He would thereby have degraded Him in nature forever, despite the fact that He had promised with an oath to exalt Him above all other natures, if He would continue faithful unto death, and despite the fact that Jesus had been faithful to the highest degree (Phil. 2:5-8).

Under such conditions to have resurrected our Lord to human nature would have made God violate His oath to Jesus (Gen. 22:16, 17; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 6:17-20), since He promised with an oath to make Him heavenly, spiritual, "as the stars of heaven." God is not a liar (Heb. 6:17, 18); for to be such would violate the perfection of His character. Therefore the perfection of His character forbade His resurrecting Jesus to human nature. On the contrary, the perfection of God's character in harmony with His promise and oath to Jesus, if faithful (which He was), is the best of guarantees that the resurrection of Jesus occurred as that of a spirit being, yes, even in the highest of all spiritual natures, the Divine nature (Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3-5; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16). Hence Jesus is now a spirit, and as such is and forever will remain invisible to human physical sight, and so must be invisible in His Return.

Before introducing our ninth proof of Jesus' resurrection to a spirit nature, we desire to remark that under proofs (g) and (h) we showed that the doctrine of Christ's resurrection to human nature violates the Ransom doctrine and the doctrine of the perfection of God's character. Any doctrine that does violence to the Ransom or the character of God is thereby proven to be false. These two things, among others, are doctrinal touchstones. Whatever does not adhere to them is thereby proven to contain alloy. Therefore the doctrine of Christ's resurrection to human nature, doing violence to the Ransom doctrine and to the character of God, is false, is an invention of Satan.

JESUS A FULLY DEVELOPED NEW CREATURE

(i) A ninth argument proves that Jesus' resurrection was not to human nature but to a spirit nature: *His having passed through the various stages of character development as a New Creature from the begetting to the birth of the Spirit.* That His character as a New Creature, a spiritual character, reached perfection the Scriptures assure us (Heb. 2:10; 5:8, 9). So His affections were completely detached from earthly things and attached to heavenly things (Col. 3:1-4).

Accordingly, as a New Creature Jesus had developed a character in which the characteristic of sacrificing the earthly for the heavenly was unbreakably crystallized. This implies that if He had been raised from the dead as a human being, He would forthwith have proceeded to sacrifice His humanity again unto death; for all His aspirations were crystallized in heavenly-mindedness, and thus were unchangeably adverse to the earthly-mindedness of human nature. This crystallized condition of His New Creature character would shortly have put again His humanity completely to death if He had been resurrected a human being; and if resurrected a thousand times as a human being, it would as often put His humanity to death.

In other words, such a process would of necessity have to set in, if one, crystallized in a New Creature character, were raised from the dead a human being. But the Bible teaches us that, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). Therefore He was not raised from the dead as a human being but as a spirit being; and if a spirit being, He is invisible, and therefore in His Second Advent He must be invisible to physical sight.

JESUS' OFFICE AS SAVIOR

(j) A tenth fact proves that Christ was resurrected, not a human, but a spirit being: *His office as Savior of the elect now and of the obedient of the world in the Millennial Mediatorial Reign*. A human being would be unable to minister to the multitudinous needs of God's children scattered all over the earth, and to checkmate the attempts of Satan, the demons and fallen men against His elect; for only a highly exalted spirit being could do this well. Much less could a human being bind Satan and his fallen angels, destroy Satan's empire and establish God's Kingdom, awaken all the dead, restoring their personality and individual characteristics, and then through a Mediatorial Reign offer them effective help for their restoration to human perfection, and actually work it in all that will obey, not to speak of turning this earth into a paradise.

Only a highly exalted spirit being could do these things, which will constitute the chief features of His ministry to the world of mankind in the Millennial Mediatorial Reign. Therefore His possession of the capacities to fulfill His ministry to the Church now and to the world in the Mediatorial Reign proves that He was raised from the dead, not in human nature, but in a spirit nature. Therefore He is forever invisible to mankind's physical sight, and for this reason His Second Coming must be invisible to their physical sight.

JESUS' OFFICE AS GOD'S VICEGERENT

(k) An eleventh Biblical teaching proves the same thing: *Jesus' office as God's Vicegerent*. The Bible most clearly teaches that God does all things by Him (1 Cor. 8:6; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11; 3:21; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:3-5; Rev. 5:11-13). This means, of course, that He is Jehovah's Vicegerent throughout the Universe. Self-evidently the duties of such an office cannot be performed by a human. How, to mention but one item among millions, could a human, a being lower than an angel, control the angels, the heavenly principalities, powers, thrones, dominions, cherubim and seraphim? Accordingly, we see from His being Jehovah's Vicegerent that He is no longer a human being but a spirit being, who as such must be invisible to mankind's physical eyes, and who accordingly must be invisible to their physical eyes in His Second Advent.

JESUS' APPEARANCES TO HIS DISCIPLES

(l) As a twelfth and final point in proof of His resurrection as a spirit being and not as a human being, we offer *the facts of His various appearances with different bodies to His disciples after His resurrection*. To understand His appearances to them in different bodies we must remember several things: (1) the nature of Christ's resurrection body, which we have already proven to be a spirit body and not a human body, and which necessarily implies that it was invisible to the physical sight of His disciples; and (2) the purpose of His appearances, and that in different bodies, which was to prove to them that (a) He was alive from the dead and (b) that none of the bodies that He caused to appear and disappear before them was His resurrection body, which being spiritual was necessarily invisible to them (1 Tim. 6:16). Remembering then that Jesus had the twofold purpose of proving to His disciples He was alive from the dead and that He was changed in nature from a human to a spirit being, we are put into a position to understand clearly the entire account of His appearances in different bodies to the disciples.

The disciples, in harmony with God's Word, believed that the dead are dead and therefore can know and do nothing (Eccles. 9:5, 10; Psa. 6:5; 78:50; 146:4; 1 Cor. 15:13-18). Accordingly, all that Jesus had to do to prove to them that He was alive again was to do something and show that He had knowledge of various things. Thus His simple announcing of Himself as alive, and His actions when He appeared to them, were proofs sufficient to them that He was alive from the dead. Additionally, to convince them that He was changed from the human to a spirit nature, He appeared to them in a variety of bodies, from which they gradually drew the conclusion that none of the bodies that they saw was His real resurrection body, which they, gradually coming to learn was spirit, recognized could not be seen with physical sight. Thus He convinced them quickly that He was alive, and gradually that He was no longer human, but Divine.

Our Lord made these appearances in the same general way that angels in the past had made their appearances to human beings, *e.g.*, to Abraham, Sarah, Lot, Jacob, Gideon, Samson's parents, *i.e.*, by creating or materializing human bodies, for the purpose; for the bodies in which the angels appeared to these persons were not their own bodies, but bodies created on the spot to make the necessary appearances, because these angels, or spirits, had spirit bodies and hence invisible bodies. The fallen angels in spiritistic seances with sinister motives materialize bodies in a similar manner now, pretending that they are our dead friends and relatives. Thus when Jesus appeared to the disciples He created the bodies that He showed them, and when He desired to *disappear* He simply dissolved those bodies. We know this to be true because He did not appear twice in the same body, at least in the first stages of the various appearances after His resurrection.

Another consideration also proves this thought: *the clothes in which Jesus appeared*. Where did He get the clothes in which He appeared after His resurrection? We know that the soldiers took His own clothes at the crucifixion (Matt. 27:35), and that at His resurrection He left the grave-clothes in the tomb (John 20:5). Evidently Jesus created the clothes that He wore at these various manifestations, appearing to Mary in the clothing of a gardener, to the two on the way to Emmaus in the garments of a traveler, *etc.* If He created different clothes for the various appearances, it is of course plain that He did the same with the different bodies that He showed the disciples.

To Mary Magdalene, Jesus first appeared as a gardener, and was not recognized by her until He made some changes in His tones, and probably in the body in which He appeared (John 20:14-18). To the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31) He appeared as a stranger and traveler, and according to Mark's testimony, *in another form* (Mark 16:12). Neither did they recognize Him while He talked with them for several hours, until in the breaking of the bread He probably made some change in His appearance that enabled them to recognize Him, their eyes being previously "holden," because previously He was "in another form."

To the ten Apostles in the upper room Jesus appeared (despite closed and locked doors, which offered no impediment to the entrance of a spirit being—John 3:8; for as such He entered the room) in a form different from the one with which they were familiar; otherwise they could not have taken Him for a spirit (Luke 24:37).

Had they been less excited, the Apostles would not have taken the material body of flesh and bones which they saw to be a spirit, since "a spirit hath not flesh and bones," as they saw the body to have which Jesus showed them—a proof positive of the fact that the body that He showed them was not His resurrection body, but one that He had created for the manifestation after entering the room, since He there said "a spirit hath not flesh and bones," and the Apostle Paul says that in His resurrection He became "a life-giving spirit" (Luke 24:39; 1 Cor. 15:45). Therefore in Jesus' resurrection His body did not have flesh and bones.

And, accordingly, the one He there showed them as having flesh and bones was one created then and there for the purpose of the manifestation and was not His resurrection body. Jesus did not add the word "blood" to the words "flesh and bones" in Luke 24:39, because, while by handling the body that He showed them they could "see"—know—that it had flesh and bones, their handling it would not enable them to "see" that it contained blood.

A week later Jesus similarly appeared to His Apostles, Thomas, who had feared that a swindler was deceiving the other disciples, being present. Jesus gave Thomas the proof of His identity and resurrection that Thomas had requested (John 20:24-27). The fact that again on this occasion Jesus entered the closed room (v. 26) proves that He entered it as a spirit being, after which He created a body of flesh that stood the acid test that Thomas had specified as a proof of His identity.

Again, to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias Jesus appeared in a still different form, and was not recognized by His form at all, but by the miracle that He performed (John 21:4-12). How in harmony with the fact that He was then before them in a totally different form from any they had seen before, is the remark, "None of the disciples *durst* ask him, Who art thou? *knowing* that it was the Lord."

This remark evidently implies (1) that the disciples did not recognize Jesus from His form; (2) that the miracle had largely but not fully convinced them that their beloved Master was again in their midst; (3) that in their hearts they felt that the miracle should have been considered by them as a strong enough evidence to their faith that it was He, for which reason they were ashamed to ask for a verbal statement of His identity, though they desired for full conviction such an assurance; and (4) that such a desire would not have been cherished by them had He appeared in His old familiar form. Moreover, the doubts in Galilee of some of the 500 disciples (others than the eleven Apostles, who had been convinced before leaving Jerusalem for Galilee) can be accounted for on no other ground than that to them He appeared in an unfamiliar form (Matt. 28:16, 17).

The facts that we have cited respecting Jesus' appearances to His disciples between His resurrection and ascension all prove that Jesus arose from the dead, not a human but a spirit being. They also prove that He created various bodies to prove to them that He was alive from the dead, and was changed from human nature to a spirit nature, and had none of the bodies that He showed to them as His glorious resurrection body.

JESUS' APPEARANCE TO SAUL OF TARSUS

Another post-resurrection appearance of our Lord worthy of our attention here, is His appearance to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus. While Saul—the Apostle Paul—did not see our Lord's actual glorified body, which sight would have killed him (1 Tim. 6:16; Heb. 1:3; Ex. 33:20), yet he saw a representation of that body, for which reason he could say that he saw the Lord—he saw the glory light that is inherent in and that shone out of that body; but so powerful was this light that before his eyes could penetrate through it to the body from which it shone, he was struck blind by its brightness (Acts 9:1-18).

Here, as it were, the veil that hid the glory of Jesus' resurrection body was partly withdrawn, and we receive a faint idea of its glory as "the glory that excelleth," and also here see final proof of the fact that Jesus did not show His disciples His resurrection body before His ascension, as well as of our Lord's wisdom in not showing even that much of "the glory that excelleth" to the disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension.

We conclude our brief study of the resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples, including the Apostle Paul, with the remark that they completely demonstrate three things: (1) none of the bodies that Jesus showed the disciples between His resurrection and ascension was His resurrection body, but they were variously created in harmony with the needs of the occasions on which they were made; (2) Jesus did not arise from the dead in the body that was crucified on the cross, or in any other human body; and (3) Jesus arose from the dead in a spirit body more glorious than the brightness of the sun at midday, a body of the Divine nature, according to passages quoted above. Therefore we are not to expect the Lord to come in the flesh. He comes not as *He was* before His death, but "*as he is*" now since His resurrection, of which the Apostle John, who saw several of His appearances after His resurrection and before His ascension, said over 60 years later, "It doth *not yet appear* what we [the Elect Church] shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him *as he is*," not *as He was* (1 John 3:2).

We have now presented the tenth, the basic proof for the invisibility of our Lord's Return: Jesus since His resurrection is no longer a human, but is a spirit being, and that of the highest order, the Divine nature. This basic proof we have just demonstrated from twelve standpoints to be Scriptural. To be saved from many delusions and to be prepared to do well our part in the Divine Plan of the Ages, which is now at a most important stage, it is especially just now of greatest necessity to see clearly the Lord's mind on the subject, as given above from the Bible; for in our day the Ransom-sacrifice of Jesus is the rock of offense and the manner of our Lord's Second Presence is the stone of stumbling; just as they were when Jesus was here in His First Advent. And "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear"!