

the bright and morning star. O! what a shout will that blessed company raise.

Glory to God.

And to the Lamb who bought us with his blood,  
From every kindred, nation, people, tongue;  
And washed, and sanctified, and saved our souls,  
And gave us robes of linen pure, and crowns  
Of life; and made us kings and priests to God.  
Shout back to ancient time! Sing loud, and wave  
Your palms of triumph. Sing, Where is thy sting  
O death? Where is thy victory, O grave?  
Thanks be to God, eternal thanks, who gave  
Us victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Harp, lift thy voice! Shout, angels shout,  
And loudest ye redeemed, Glory to God,  
And to the Lamb all glory and all praise,  
All glory and all praise at morn and even,  
That come and go eternally, and find us  
Happy still, and thee for ever blest!  
Glory to God, and to the Lamb. Amen  
For ever, and for evermore. Amen.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

### THE MYSTERY OF THE PRESENT DISPENSATION.

No. II.

In the former paper it was stated that the present dispensation was that of an elect Gentile church, chosen for the special purposes of being witnesses for Christ in the earth, during his absence from it; and of being partakers with him in the glory and felicity of the heavenly kingdom: it was also stated that such a dispensation was not known to the saints of former ages;—the truth of this last statement will appear from the following facts.

The almost exclusive *subject* of the Old Testament, is the Jewish nation. Take away from it the first twelve chapters of Genesis and the book of Job; and the books of the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, which are collections of moral maxims and sayings; and the whole of this Divine revelation is occupied with the origin, the history, and the future destiny of this people. Other nations, indeed, are mentioned; but it is either in a slight and cursory manner, or it is on account of their connexion with Israel. If any one be startled at this statement, let him just cast his eye over the list of books into which the Old Testament is divided. What do the five books of Moses contain but the origin and early records of this people? What is the subject from Joshua to Esther inclusive, but the history of this people? And to what did the visions, beheld by the prophets, relate, but to the destiny of this people? Much of what was once prophecy, has now become history; but the final promises remain to be accomplished, as a test of the faithfulness of Him who hath said, "If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, that there should

not be day and night in their season, then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne." Jer. xxxiii. 20.

2. If we turn from the leading subject of the Old Testament, to the *manner* of the inspired writers in uttering their predictions, we see further proof that no notice of the present dispensation was given by them. The mode of their predictions is almost uniform, commencing with a time of trouble, called the "day of the Lord," they then speak of the advent of a deliverer; and then of a period of blessedness consequent upon his advent. The following passage is in keeping with many others:—

Isaiah ix. 4—7; "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppression, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

In this passage we have a specimen of the usual strain of the Old Testament prophecies relating to our Lord's kingdom. First a time when judgment will be executed with burning and fuel of fire: secondly the advent of a Saviour: thirdly a period of peace and happiness under that Saviour's reign. We need not multiply examples; the student of Scripture will see, by turning to Psal. ii. ix. 5—8;—Isaiah ii. 6, to iv. 6;—x. 5, to xii. 6;—xix. 1—25;—xxiv. to xxvii;—xxxiv. xxxv;—Jer. xxx. xxxi;—xxxii. xxxiii;—Ezek. xxxiv. to xxxix;—Joel i. ii;—Amos iii. to ix;—Obadiah i;—Micah iii. to v;—Nahum i;—Zeph. i. ii. iii;—Zech. ix. 8—17;—xiv. 1—21, that this is almost the constant mode in which they present their prophecies. It is true that in other prophecies, we see the Saviour's sufferings and death foretold; but in none of them do we read of the period of nearly two thousand years elapsing between the Saviour's death and the establishment of his kingdom. And as the period itself was not known to the Old Testament saints, it is, of course, impossible that they should know what was to take place while it continued.

3. If from the subject and manner of Old Testament prophecy we proceed to contemplate the future prospects which it placed before the saints, we shall find further proof that the present dispensation was not known by them. We have no ac-

count of the ultimate hopes of Abel, Enoch, or Noah; but when we come down to Abraham, we have clear light upon the hopes of the faithful people of God. Promises were given to the patriarchs; they understood and believed them; and confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims in the earth. What were the promises which God made to them at this time to be the warrant and the foundation of their hope? We may glance at a few of them:—

Gen. xiii. 14—17; "And the Lord said unto Abraham, Lift up now thine eyes, and look, from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

Chapt. xviii. 8; "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be thy God."

Chapt. xxvi. 2, 3; "And the Lord appeared unto him (Isaac) and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father."

Chapt. xxviii. 13; "And, behold, the Lord said, (to Jacob) I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed."

In these passages the grant of the land of Canaan is made in perpetuity to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, personally; and to their descendants after them. In chap. xv. 8—18, this grant is made irrevocable by the oath of God, a fact frequently referred to in the Scriptures. "Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath with Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance." Psal. cv. 9—11. It is true, that this covenant, confirmed by the oath of God, has not been fulfilled yet; Stephen says, "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." Acts vii. 5. And Paul says, "All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Heb. xi. 13. As