

NOTES ON THE REVELATION WITH PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

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A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from Notes on the Revelation With Practical Reflections, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

56 Chapters

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Notes on the Revelation With Practical Reflections

Preface

The following pages do not lay any claim to originality. The views put forth are, in the main, held by many of the Lord's servants; and the writer has freely availed himself of the thoughts of the best instructed on this portion of God's truth. It is hoped that the division of the book into sections, with a simple exposition and practical reflections, will be found helpful, through God's blessing, especially to those who are beginning to see the value of this marvelous part of the Scripture.

Most believers will admit, that if we are not seeking to embrace the whole range of divine truth, there must be a serious lack both of comfort of soul and of testimony for the Lord; and if the word of God be not an object of interest to our hearts, something injurious will usurp its place, and thus the affections and desires will be turned from Him who alone is entitled to them, and who says,

My son, give me thine heart {Prov. 23:26}.

These considerations are deemed sufficient reasons for calling attention to "THE REVELATION."

Where an alteration has been made in the commonly received text, it has generally been in accordance with all the best critics.

To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen {Jude 25}.

Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that few persons read the book of Revelation. Why is this? With some, its difficulties are pleaded as an excuse, but its name, signifying something revealed, would certainly lead us to expect greater obstacles to its being understood than other portions of the Holy Scriptures; though we know that the natural man is unable to understand or receive any part of God's truth, but by teaching of the Holy Ghost. The question may be fairly asked, Can we find a single Christian who has read this book, prayerfully looking for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, who has not obtained much blessing? The many speculative and fanciful theories that have been advanced may have deterred some from going beyond its threshold, while the systematic way in which it has been excluded from the teaching of many godly persons, may have been the means of keeping others from having their attention directed to it. But whatever may be the reasons assigned for the neglect of this blessed portion of Divine truth, we may be assured that Satan has succeeded in robbing many of the Lord's dear children of the profit and enjoyment of this last written communication of the risen and ascended Jesus to His Church.

But after all, it is questionable whether indifferentism be not in most instances the reason why "The Revelation" is so neglected. Let us test ourselves on this point. If we were more alive to the realities of the Cross of Christ — the price paid for our redemption — if the groans of the Sin-Bearer, and His unutterable, unfathomable sorrows were felt in our souls with more freshness and power, how could we rest till we read, nay, understood, His last words to the assemblies? How could we think of Him as our ever-living and ever-loving High Priest, without being deeply concerned about those things which He declares must shortly come to pass?

The Revelation may truly be called the book of results. In it, though Christ's faithfulness to His own abides, declension marks the Churches. Sin receives its eternal wages. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are seen in full bloom, and pass away for ever. False religion is judged, its blazing glory extinguished, and the smoke of the unchaste woman rises up for ever and ever. Man living in rebellion is crushed under the feet of Jesus, and the dead are banished from His presence for ever. The Antichrist and his associates meet their just and most terrible abasement and misery. Satan is everlastingly consigned to the lake of fire. The created heavens and earth are cleared of evil, and Christ's power fully known, His worth fully owned. The Church is seen in glory, in uncreated light and beauty, and the new heavens and the new earth speak to us only of righteousness and blessing from God to man. It is emphatically a book of judgment upon things on earth; prophetic, of course, in its character.

Unlike the Epistles, we do not find the believer's calling or relationship with the Father treated of in the Revelation. We only have the Father referred to about four times; twice as "His Father" and "my Father," and always referring to God as the Father of the Lord Jesus. In this book we see God preparing the earth for His Son, the rightful Heir, under whose feet all enemies will be put.

There appear to be three great hindrances to saints having a clear apprehension of at least the outline of this blessed book. First, the false and unbelieving feeling, long cherished by many, that

the Revelation is full of mysteries which no one can understand. Secondly, the erroneous idea that the main scope of the book is a prophetic statement of events while the Church is on earth, and that we are now perhaps in the midst of the outpouring of some of the vials. The consequence is, that it is approached with wrong thoughts, so that the book becomes at once so perplexing that it is quickly laid aside. Thirdly, the chief difficulty perhaps is having false ideas of what the Church of God really is; not seeing its special and unique character, which is defined in Scripture to be

the body of Christ, the fullness of Him which filleth all in all (Eph. 1:21, 22).

When the believer clearly sees that the Lord abolished in His death the law of commandments in ordinances in order to create (not apart from Himself, but) "in Himself" ONE NEW MAN, he gets at once something new before his mind, very distinct from what had ever gone before, or, as I believe, will follow. It was to this the Lord referred when He said to Peter,

Upon this rock will I build my Church (Matt. 16:18).

Believers now know union with Christ, and are partakers of the heavenly calling — are quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This very distinctive truth the book of Revelation does not enter into; for it is, as we have said, a book of judgment, and especially of things in relation to the earth. We do get in the Revelation the Lord judging the assemblies on earth professedly gathered to His name, but the Church in her special and unique character as the body of Christ, as before observed, is not treated of there; she is, however, seen coming down from heaven as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in manifested glory, to take her place in the glories of the kingdom, and she is also seen afterwards as the Bride in the eternal state, when the Son shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father.

We must not, however, forget that the same portion of God's word often admits of more solutions than one. Besides, there are principles in it as well as facts. In this way, we doubt not the use of the book, in past times of the Church, for the guidance and blessing of those who were a testimony against the tyrannical pretensions of Rome.

We find a table of contents at the close of the first chapter.

1. The things which John saw.
2. The things which are.
3. The things which shall be hereafter, or, after these things. We have at once, therefore, a sure guide at the threshold of the book. But more than this; for from the beginning of the fourth

chapter, where the third division commences, on to the end, we have also several sub-divisions or sections. These are not arranged as a number of historical discourses, each following the other in regular order of narration, but each division gives us a distinct line of instruction. Thus the whole book may be regarded as a series of pictures, each distinct from the others, and every one, so far as it goes, complete in itself; and if we will only be content to take one of these sections at a time, and study it prayerfully, we shall find that at least the outline of the book will be clearly seen, though we may have still much to learn as to the details.

The book opens with introductory sentences, extending to the end of the eighth verse. Then we have the sections of the book fairly presented to us.

1. The vision of the first chapter, and its connections, form a distinct section or picture — the things which John saw — the Lord as Son of man in the midst of the assemblies, judging them as to their responsibility to Him, as light-bearers in a dark world. It extends from the ninth verse to the end.

2. The second and third chapters form another division — the things which are. Here the saints' accountability as to the rights of Christ, the honor of Christ, and the truth of Christ, are clearly brought out. We learn the solemn responsibility of assemblies bearing the name of Christ; and see everything judged according to the love, and truth, and holiness of that name. How few seem to be aware of their accountability to Christ for their corporate position and action, and of what is really involved in being gathered together in the name of Jesus.

3. The fourth and fifth chapters present to us another picture. It is mostly a heavenly scene. Everything is looked at in connection with the throne of God. The lamb, as it had been slain, fills heaven with joy and praise, and the circle so widens, that our spirits are led out into the contemplation of millennial blessing, when every creature in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, will praise the Lamb.

4. We may look at the opening of the SEVEN SEALS as another section. It extends from the beginning of the sixth chapter to the fifth verse of the eighth chapter.

The seventh chapter coming in between the sixth and seventh seals is a parenthesis. There is also a parenthesis between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, and the outpouring of the sixth and seventh vials. Each of these seven-fold series of judgments terminates in lightnings, and thunderings, and voices, and a great earthquake.

5. The sounding of the SEVEN TRUMPETS may be looked at also as a distinct section, extending from the sixth verse of the eighth chapter to the end of the eleventh chapter. Observe that this division goes on to the judgment of the dead at the end of the millennium. It is important to notice also, that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, when there are lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, the Lord Jesus comes forth in glory with His saints to take the kingdom, and judge the world in righteousness. The voices in heaven say,

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever {Rev. 11:15}.

The parenthesis between the sixth and seventh trumpets occupies the tenth chapter, and the first fourteen verses of the eleventh chapter.

6. The twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters give us another section. It is a deeply interesting portion for our spiritual contemplation. It goes back to the incarnation of our Lord — the man-child — and extends to His coming in flaming fire to tread the winepress of the wrath of God. It is the history of the remnant of Israel in the time of the great tribulation.

7. The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters may be read together. We first have the martyred remnant of the previous section now standing on the sea of glass before the throne of God in heaven; then we have the outpouring of the vials.

There is also a short parenthesis between the sixth and seventh vials.

8. Though we have had the judgment and fall of Babylon announced before, yet so important is the consideration of this

mother of harlots and abominations of the earth {Rev. 17:5},

that the next two chapters are occupied in giving details of her mysterious working and bewitching influence. Multitudes are deceived by her, and drawn within the vortex of her intoxicating grasp. As she had a place of luxuriousness and popularity in the world, both in a civil and religious aspect, so her sorrow and torment must be accordingly.

9. The nineteenth and twentieth chapters, and also the first eight verses of the twenty-first chapter give us another separate portion of this blessed book. The Lamb's wife is here seen in contrast with the great whore. The marriage of the Lamb takes place, and heaven is opened for Christ and His saints to come forth in manifested glory. The judgment of the beast and false prophet, the kings of the earth and their associates, and the binding of Satan, usher in the millennial reign. Here we get the first resurrection defined, as, in a manner, distributive, and all who have part in it reign with Christ. We have also the letting loose of Satan at the close of the thousand years, and the judgment of God upon the myriads of living wicked deceived by him, followed by the final judgment of all the wicked dead. This is succeeded by a description of the eternal state, the new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

10. The next scene takes us back again. It gives us the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in relation to the kingdom during the reign of Christ, filling up a most important and necessary part in prophetic truth. It extends from the ninth verse of the twenty-first chapter to the sixth verse of the twenty-second chapter. It is a golden scene, full of light, and life, and blessing. The former part of the chapter shows us the Bride in her eternal state.

The last section is followed by some fragmentary sentences, in which the coming of the Lord as the present hope of the believer is the most prominent thought.

With this book the Scriptures are closed, so that for any man now to add to God's word is to expose himself to the plagues written in this book. It is addressed by the Lord to the assemblies, and concludes with the thrice repeated assurance of His coming quickly.

In looking through this blessed book, however hastily, we cannot fail to notice how often Christ is brought before us as THE LAMB. Its importance is obvious; for the believer proves in his experience that truth itself, apart from The Truth, is rather calculated to amuse the intellect than to warm the heart; it also shows us that God's way of teaching prophecy is not so much by the arrangement of events in chronological order, as viewing everything in relation to Christ Himself. In the Revelation, THE LAMB is the center around which all else is clustered, the foundation on which everything lasting is built, the nail on which all else hangs, the object to which all points, and the spring from which all blessing proceeds. THE LAMB is the light, the glory, the life, the Lord of heaven and earth, from whose face all defilement must flee away, and in whose presence fullness of joy is known. Hence, we cannot go far in the study of The Revelation, without seeing THE LAMB, like direction-posts along the road, to remind us that He who did by Himself purge our sins is now highly exalted, and that to Him every knee must bow, and every tongue confess.

If the saying of another be true, that

“They flourish as the watered herb,

Who keep THE LAMB in sight.”

then this one feature of this inspired book should be enough to engage our hearts, and warrant the largest expectations of blessing. And if the frequent contemplation of the precious blood of Christ keeps down the weeds of our flesh, nourishes the inner man, and is the wine that cheers both God and man, we may be assured of gathering much profit from the frequent and prayerful reading of this book, where THE LAMB as it had been slain is so prominently set forth, and where we are so often reminded of the sufferings of Christ, and the judgments and glories which follow.

Chapter 1:1-3: Introductory Verses

The first words give us the title of the book — “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The first three verses are a kind of preface. We are reminded that the ascended Jesus, though invested with all power in heaven and in earth, is still Jehovah’s righteous servant, and as such receives this book from God. John, not simply by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, as was usual, but by the guidance of an angel, receives the particulars of the book to communicate to the churches. We are told that the object of the Revelation is to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass. (They are not called, as in John’s other writings, the friends of Jesus, or sons of God, but servants.) To show the shortness of time in the mind of God, and the speedy fulfilment of the prophetic word, it is added in the third verse,

The time is at hand {Rev. 1:3}.

John writes with authority, being conscious that he is recording God’s truth, and that the various scenes and actions he was about to relate were the testimony of Jesus Christ — things which he had heard and seen in vision (ver. 2).

An especial blessing is promised to those who hear (even if unable to read) (ver. 3). How encouraging! How different are man’s thoughts to God’s! Man says, Do not read the book of Revelation, it is so difficult; or do not listen to any who may read it to you. God says, Whether you read or hear you shall find blessing.

By keeping

those things which are written therein {Rev. 1:3},

we have not the thought of obeying commands, like the law of Moses, as much as keeping in the heart the solemn instruction which the prophetic word conveys. In this book, the future passes before the mind’s eye like a panorama, shedding its light upon everything of the present, and pointing out the course of all the principles at work around us. All who keep these things in their hearts will find present blessing. We are told that Mary kept the sayings of Jesus in her heart. Jesus also spoke of this as a special mark of those who loved Him:

If a man love me, he will keep my words: . . . He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings (John 14:23, 24).

Surely this is a searching word for the conscience of any who have neglected the sayings of Jesus contained in “The Revelation.”

Verses 4 to 8 may be looked at as introductory to the great subjects of the book.

Seven churches in Asia are selected for John to address. He salutes them in the usual apostolic manner with

Grace unto you, and peace {Rev. 1:4}.

Observe the order. — not peace and grace, but “Grace unto you, and peace”; because peace always flows from grace, and our enjoyment of peace is entirely dependent on our apprehension of Divine grace. But it is not, as in other epistles, added, from God the Father, but

from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come {Rev. 1:4};

that is, from the eternal I AM; for this book is rather the dealings of God with man in the earth, than of the Father with His sons. Then we get,

From the seven Spirits which are before His throne {Rev. 1:4}.

As seven is a symbol of perfection, we have the Eternal Spirit in fullness in His various actings, rather than the indwelling and actings of the “one Spirit” in the Church, as in Ephesians (v. 4).

Lastly, it is from

Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness;

for every other witness has proved more or less unfaithful:

the first-begotten from the dead,

for He is the Son begotten in resurrection; the first who rose from the dead, never more to die; and He is also presented as

the Prince of the kings of the earth {Rev. 1:5},

because the book largely treats of kings, and other things of earth; hence His title and power are asserted. Immediately the glory, triumph, and dominion of Christ are spoken of, the Church seems at once exultingly to respond with,

Unto Him that loved [loveth] us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen {Rev. 1:5, 6}.

Notice in this song —

1st. They have the joy of present redemption.

2nd. That all true believers are priests — a royal priesthood;

and

3rd. That all is traced to Divine love, and flows to us through the blood-shedding and death of the Son of God. This fills the heart with joy, and the lips with praise (vv.5, 6).

In v. 7, the Lord's coming is presented to us according to the subject of the book in relation to the earth. His saints (of course) are with Him, having been previously caught up to meet Him in the air. The scene is Christ manifested in glory as the only Potentate. The last time the world saw Christ was on the Cross; the next time they see Him will be coming in the clouds of heaven. Then, in His own glory, the glory of the Father and of the holy angels, with all His saints changed and fashioned into His glorious likeness, with a dazzling brightness that is inconceivable,

every eye shall see Him {Rev. 1:7}.

The Jews, too, shall

look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn {see Zech. 12:10};

while all the tribes of the earth in bitterest anguish wail, because Jesus is come to take vengeance, and put all enemies under His feet.

“Bright with all His Crowns of glory,

See the royal Victor’s brow;

Once for sinners marred and glory –

See the Lamb exalted now;

While before Him

Every knee on earth must bow.

“King of kings! let earth adore Him

High on His exalted throne;

Fall, ye nations, fall before Him,

And His righteous sceptre own; All the glory

Be to Him and Him alone!”

Happy those who can peacefully contemplate that day, and truly say,

Even so. Amen {Rev. 1:7}.

After we are thus instructed about the manifestation of Christ in glory, the announcement of His eternal Godhead closes the introduction (v. 8).

Chapter 1:9-20: the Things Which John Saw

We now come, strictly speaking, to THE REVELATION. It divides into three parts:

The things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter,

or

after these things (v. 19).

The first division occupies the first chapter, from the twelfth to the seventeenth verses. These are the things which John had just seen.

John addresses himself, not as one in apostolic office, or as a member of the "one body," the Church, but as a brother of all the servants of God, and their companion in the kingdom, now characterized by tribulation and by exercise of patience. The kingdom predicted by prophets promised peace and blessing, as will be known in millennial times; but the kingdom has hitherto been, and in the action of this book is marked with tribulation and evil by Satan's power, although also by God's blessing to His people, and will end in judgment, as we learn from Matt. 13:11, 42, 50, and other Scriptures. It is the kingdom of heaven in mystery. There is, therefore, need of patience until Jesus comes.

In the world ye shall have tribulation,

said Jesus;

but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world {John 16:33}.

The Lord's aged and honored servant was banished to Patmos, a desolate island in the Grecian Archipelago, for the word of God and the testimony of Christ. Little, perhaps, did he think that the solitary and barren island would be a place for his being favored by God with such deep communion and astounding revelations. But so it was. Again the apostle proved that

before honour is humility {Prov. 15:33, 18:12},

and that God's way of preparing us for special blessing is to bring low; as we sometimes say, "The way to exaltation is the dust"; and the thought is full of comfort to God's tried and humbled children. Those who are exercised before God will usually find that the longer and deeper the time of trial, the richer the blessing that follows.

The apostle tells that he

was in the Spirit {Rev. 1:10}.

While all believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, we are not always "in the Spirit." To be "in the Spirit" implies that the faculties of the soul are so under the power and unction of the Holy

Ghost, as to enable us to discern and enter into the mind of God, and to be occupied with His things. This is an important practical point. It is to be feared that we often set about attending to spiritual matters in a carnal frame, and are content to know that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, without being careful to be “in the Spirit.” We need the anointed eye, and a spiritual frame of soul, if we would profit others or enjoy the truth of God ourselves. By

the Lord’s day {Rev. 1:10}

we are not to understand “the day of the Lord,” but the first day of the week; the day which reminds us of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, of rest in a finished work, and triumph in a risen Head.

The first thing that arrested the attention of the apostle was the sound behind him of

a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches, etc. {Rev. 1:10, 11}.

Thus the person is announced, and the apostle’s service clearly marked out. This trumpet-like sound induced John to turn round to see what it was, when the glorious vision of one like unto the Son of man,

in the midst of seven golden candlesticks {see Rev. 1:13},

was immediately brought before him. With regard to the candlesticks, we are told

The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches (Rev. 1:20);

thus we do not get here the doctrine of “the Church,” the body of Christ, “one body,” “one new man,” and such-like expressions, but “seven churches”; because the vision has regard to those who bear the name of Christ in earthly circumstances, and in responsibility to Christ, rather than the one body, or as seated in heavenly places in Christ, as we find treated of in Ephesians. The Lord is therefore seen

in the midst {Rev. 1:13}.

This is His promised place.

Whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

The thought, however, of the one body of Christ is in a certain sense included, inasmuch as there was but one candlestick in one city — no division. In fact, the idea of different churches in one city is nowhere found in Scripture, while division, or a sectarian position, is most solemnly condemned. The Church, therefore, composed of all the believers in a city, as in Ephesus for instance, was a golden candlestick, — costly, precious, and valuable as gold, and a fit vessel for bearing light. Such is the Church of God. It has no light in itself — nothing but what is bestowed by the ascended Jesus.

Christ is seen in the midst of the “golden candlesticks,” and that, too, in the character of a discernor and judge in His own house, the only time we have Him in such a character, with readiness to bless and encourage, as well as to correct. And I cannot exclude the thought, that His

first being presented as

like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle {Rev. 1:13},

is to remind us that He is also a merciful, compassionate, and sympathizing High Priest. By

His head and hairs white like wool, as white as snow,

we are taught that He not only bears the marks of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7), but is infinitely pure and holy; while

His eyes, as a flame of fire {Rev. 1:14},

are all searching, from whose notice nothing can escape. His almighty power to put all enemies under His feet, and trample them in His fury, may be brought out by

His feet, like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;

and

His voice, as the sound of many waters {Rev. 1:15},

may teach us that His mighty voice may be heard far and wide as the thunders of the fall of Niagara; for unto Him is given all power in heaven and in earth.

Nor are the assemblies to forget that

out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword {Rev. 1:16},

by which He can execute judgments (Rev. 2:16). His countenance, the bright effulgence of glory and uncreated light, was

Such is Christ's present place among the churches. Though, strictly speaking, no company of Christians can now lay claim to be the candlestick in any place, because of our sinful divisions and sects, yet we can always count upon His presence, if really

gathered together in His name (Matt. 18:20).

But while we are assured of His presence, we should never forget our responsibility to Him as the Head of the body, and Master of His own house (Heb. 3:6).

Verse 17. The effect of this glorious vision of Christ on the beloved apostle he then describes:

When I saw HIM, I fell at His feet as dead {Rev. 1:17}.

Overpowered with the glimpse of the glorified Son of man, the mortal powers gave way; but it was only to bring out the grace and tenderness of Him who was so precious to the apostle's heart. The

right hand

of Jesus was soon laid on His servant, now fallen prostrate at His feet, and the comforting words fell from His gracious lips,

Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death {Rev. 1:17, 18}.

Thus, by the eye and heart being again fixed on the triumphant Savior, who conquered death and hell for him, and by the Lord's tender assurance that He was his loving Savior, and that there was no ground for fear, John was comforted, and then instructed to write what he had just seen.

as the sun shineth in his strength {Rev. 1:16}.

By

the seven stars in His right hand {see Rev. 1:16},

we are taught not only that He is the Source, but the Sustainer of all ministry to the Church.

He gave gifts unto men {Eph. 4:8},

and in His power alone they can be exercised for true profit. Christ is presented to us as judging the churches, as Peter tells

judgment must begin at the house of God {1 Pet. 4:17}.

It is quite unscriptural to call a building of brick and stone a "sanctuary," or "house of God." God's people, the members of Christ, now are God's house; it is composed of living stones, and Christ judges both individually and corporately. Blessed it is to know that the Master's rule is

If we judge ourselves, we should not be judged {1 Cor. 11:31};

but it is very solemn, that

when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world {1 Cor. 11:32}.

Like the true antitype of Aaron, Christ trims the lamps, removes the hindrances to the bright burning of the light, pours in oil, and never extinguishes the feeble glimmer of little faith. Christ must have realities.

Chapters 2 and 3: the Things Which Are {Introduction}

In the second and third chapters we have presented to us the next section of THE REVELATION

The things which are {Rev. 1:3, 19}.

That these seven assemblies really existed at the time there can be no doubt, and it is very profitable to have the Lord's judgment recorded of the condition they were in, and of what He had to command or to reprove. We thus get a line of instruction that is most valuable to us both individually, and as connected together on assembly ground.

Believers, in this dispensation, have a high, holy, and heavenly calling, are brought into very wonderful privileges, receive most blessed spiritual gifts, and, therefore, have solemn responsibilities. God is also building together those who are saved by grace. There are, therefore, corporate as well as personal obligations to Christ, who is

over His house {Heb. 3:6}.

Hence Christ judges, commends, instructs, rebukes, and chastens.

We must bear in mind, as before remarked, that it is not the Church as seen in heaven, or truth of one body that is here considered; but local assemblies on earth, associated not only with Christ and His truth, but with evil and failure, and exposed to outward persecution and conflict with Satan. The circle embraces those who were standing out under the profession of the name of Christ. The Lord, therefore, judges. Peter says:

The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God {1 Pet. 4:17}.

We can judge ourselves by these just weights of the sanctuary.

But while it is plain, that these addresses strictly represent the condition of seven actual congregations, there are good reasons for believing that they are intended to give us a prophetic sketch of the Church on earth to the very end.

1. Because we have no mention in the Revelation of churches on earth after the close of these chapters; that is, the Church is never seen on earth, after the conclusion of "the things which are." the saints are seen in heaven from the fourth chapter onward, having been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming.

2. Christ speaks of the seven candlesticks as a mystery, giving us the idea of there being something symbolic in their meaning (chap. 1:20). The Lord is seen only in the midst of these seven; but no one doubts that Christ was in the midst of all the perhaps hundreds of assemblies on earth at that time. Again, the number seven, called a perfect number, is frequently used in this book as symbolical of a whole. Thus we have seven spirits before the throne, seven lamps of fire, seven stars, seven candlesticks, seven

eyes, seven horns, seven seals, seven angels, seven trumpets, seven vials, and seven last plagues.

3. The first assembly named exactly corresponds with the earliest failure of the Church in this dispensation — declension of heart:

Thou hast left thy first love {Rev. 2:4}.

This was the beginning of falling away —

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen {Rev. 2:5}.

The last church of the seven is so thoroughly self-satisfied, heartless, and indifferent to Christ's glory, that He is ready to disown it altogether:

I will spue thee out of my mouth {Rev. 3:16}.

This, too, is what we expect at the close. The word of the apostle concerning this dispensation is

Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity, but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off {Rom. 11:20-22}.

These are solemn words. We know that they are not intended to shake the security of the true believer in Christ, but to intimate that God will disown apostate Christianity, as He has apostate Judaism. The intermediate assemblies remind us also of outward persecution, the polluting ravages of Balaam's doctrine — carnality and worldliness; the abominations of adulterous Jezebel and her children — Popery, with the coming in of hope of the Lord's return; dead formality — Protestantism, with a few walking with the Lord; some spiritual reviving, with promise of being kept from the hour of temptation, just before the awful indifference sets in: ending in being disowned by Christ altogether.

If it be asked, What is meant by "the angel" of the church, to which each letter is addressed? We reply, There is no scriptural ground whatever for identifying it with "the pastor." While pastors are blessed gift of the ascended Jesus, the idea of "the pastor" is not found in the New Testament; for there might have been many "pastors" in each assembly. There were many overseers at Ephesus, and also "bishops" and "deacons" in the church at Philippi. It is easier to say what the angel is not, than exactly to define what it is. We would speak humbly on a subject of such controversy. But finding the expression,

The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest . . . are the angels of the seven churches,

and that they are held in the

right hand {Rev. 1:20}

of the risen and ascended Jesus, we are inclined to believe that the angel is symbolic of gifted persons mentioned in Eph. 4, those who have the Lord's work at heart, through whom the Lord could communicate His mind, and whom He holds in a certain sense responsible, both as to faithfulness and failure of the assembly.

In each of these epistles the Lord presents Himself in a character suited to the peculiar condition of the assembly. He asserts His rights as Son over His own house and judges. The saints are taught their responsibilities to Him, and to view everything in relation to Him. Many grieve at having offended a brother, but how have we treated Christ? Have we honored Him? Have we been faithful to His truth? Have we given to Him His right place? Has He had our affections? Have we walked worthy of Him? He informs each assembly that He is thoroughly acquainted with it.

I know thy works {Rev. 2:1, 9, 13, 19, 3:1, 8, 15}.

Observe that Christ's rule is to commend everything He can first, and then to enter upon failure. We commonly find this in the New Testament. If Christ had to reprove one for doubting, He first acknowledged the faith:

O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? {see Matt. 14:31}

and when Paul wrote, by the Holy Ghost, to the saints at Corinth, who were dishonoring the Lord in so many ways, he began his epistle by enumerating the things he could approve in them. This is always a mark of spiritual-mindedness. We are looking at persons carnally, if we think only of their failures. We do well to be imitators of God, as dear children, in this respect.

In those addresses, while corporate responsibility to Christ is fully owned, yet each individual conscience is appealed to:

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches {Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22}.

Observe, too, that each is to hear what is addressed to all the assemblies, according to the truths of the one body and one Spirit. This makes every part of these addresses of deep personal import to all. The promise is also to the individual that overcomes —

Him that overcometh, etc. {see Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21}.

A word of instruction, remonstrance, or exhortation is also given to each assembly, calculated to restore; and also an encouragement set before the overcomer. If it be asked, What is meant by "him that overcometh"? We are answered by the same apostle in another letter:

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? {1 John 5:4, 5}.

The overcomer, then, is the true follower of Christ. He it is that holds fast to the end; for He that has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Christ. The promises, therefore, to the overcomer are generally similar to the promises of the gospel; such as, he shall

eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God {Rev. 2:7};

thou shalt have a crown of life {see Rev. 2:10};

he

shall not be hurt of the second death {Rev. 2:11}, etc.

Now let us look a little at the peculiar features of each assembly.

Ephesus

The Lord commends these saints for their labors and patience; their faithfulness in testing those who said they were apostles, and proving them to be liars; their patient continuance in laboring for Christ's name sake, and not fainting; for their hatred to the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, and intolerance of evil persons. But with all these good qualities the Lord had something serious against them, and could only regard them as "fallen," notwithstanding all their outward zeal; for they had inwardly declined in affection to Himself.

Thou hast left thy first love {Rev. 2:4}.

This was very deep failure; for it is the affections and desires of our hearts that are to be guarded —

Keep thy heart, etc. {Prov. 4:23}.

We love Him because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

It was failure, then, most grievous to the heart of Jesus, and which weakened, if not corrupted, the very spring of all spiritual power. They are exhorted, therefore, to

repent, and do the first works {Rev. 2:5},

and threatened to lose the honor of being God's witness in the earth, if they turned not from this declining course.

I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except that thou repent {Rev. 2:5}.

Observe, that repentance and returning to the first works are the prescribed means of restoration; for we must not only know our privileges rightly to feel our responsibilities, but we must also carry out our responsibilities, if we would enjoy our privileges.

The overcomer is encouraged by the promise to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God {Rev. 2:7}: not in the midst of God's creation, but of God's own paradise, and may mean not only unceasing satisfaction in Christ, but to share with Him, the last Adam, the life, joy, and blessings of the new creation.

Smyrna

There is nothing in this Church calling for reproof. They were poor as to this world, but rich in faith, suffering much outward persecution and trial. One of these trials was the blasphemy of some calling themselves Jews, who were not; but the Lord assures them that He knows that, and also informs them that the persecution will be only for a limited time —

ten days {Rev. 2:10}.

He encourages them to

fear not {see Rev. 2:10}.

He presents Himself to them as

the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive {Rev. 2:8},

and thus stands on the other side of death with a

crown of life {Rev. 2:10}

for any who are faithful unto death. James tells us that God has promised

the crown of life

to

those who love Him {James 1:12},

and speaks of it in connection with enduring trial.

The overcomer is encouraged and comforted with the assurance, that though he may die the first death for the name of Jesus, yet he

shall not be hurt of the second death {Rev. 2:11}.

Pergamos

We have seen that declension of love characterized the first assembly in

the things which are {Rev. 1:3, 19},

and persecution with poverty the second. In the third, seducing doctrines, carnality, and worldliness, were inside the assembly. Baalim's doctrine which so successfully damaged and overcame the Israelites, was that God's people might have association with the Moabites — thus they lost their separate position as a people, and fell into grievous sin.

From the Lord presenting Himself as He that hath

the sharp sword with two edges {Rev. 2:12},

we might expect there was much to reprove, and so it was. Still, as usual, the Lord commends all He can first. He informs them that He knows that Pergamos is Satan's seat; has not forgotten that one of their company, Antipas, had been a faithful martyr, and that they still hold fast His name, and have not denied His faith. But there were some among them holding the doctrine of Baalim, and others holding the evil doctrines of the Nicolaitanes. The Ephesian saints were commended for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes; but, alas! there was now bad doctrine inside the Church. This is very sad, and Christ must deal with such things in His own house. How terrible the thought of Satan having such power in the Church on earth! some like Baalim, seeking to ensnare the sheep and lambs, to turn them to idolatry, and filthiness of flesh and spirit; others were holding an evil doctrine connected with "deeds" which Christ hated. Sooner or later we may expect error in "doctrine" to be connected with evil "deeds."

As we might suppose, Christ calls upon the assembly to repent, and threatens to fight against them (the holders of evil doctrine) if there be not repentance.

The overcomer is promised to feast on

the hidden manna {Rev. 2:17};

this may be the unrevealed glory and beauty of Christ, the Sustainer of His people. The

white stone {Rev. 2:17}

may teach us that he is to be publicly and specially honored before men. He is also to have a

new name, which no one knoweth saving he which receiveth it {see Rev. 2:17}.

Jacob had a new name —

Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed {Gen. 32:28}.

Whoever knew the depth and meaning of this new name like Jacob, the supplanter, who received it?

We may notice, that after this third address a promise is not given after the exhortation,

He that hath an ear, etc. {Rev. 2:29},

but before it. This divides the seven addresses into three and four. The sevens in this book are often divided in this way. It is also important to observe that each of the remaining assemblies has the coming of the Lord or His reign set before it; intimating that the principles of these four assemblies go on to the end.

Thyatira

Here we have a greater power of Satan and evil within the assembly; it becomes the birth-place of evil. The Lord, therefore, introduces Himself not only as the Searcher out of evil, but as mighty to judge and crush under His feet —

the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass {Rev. 2:18}.

There were some points in these saints worthy of commendation — faith, love, patience, zeal, and continuance in the service of God; but there was also something very false and evil in their midst. The spirit of wicked Jezebel had been terribly at work, and brought forth children. The mother of harlots is here. Her assumption had been tolerated; her adulterous and idolatrous principles taught. Some had been led away, and had fallen into her uncleanness. Their spiritual idolatry was flagrant; not only the friendship of the world, but friendship with the world. Like as in Ahab's day, the teaching and authority of God were set aside by the idolatry and religion of the world. What is so bad as the world's religion?

“Repent!” “Repent!” was the Lord's command. She had had space given to her for repentance, and had repented not. Therefore said Jesus,

Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. [Mark again, evil doctrine always leads to evil deeds. And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works {Rev. 2:22, 23}.

We see here not only the Lord's hatred to evil, but His longsuffering, His readiness to accept a change of mind, and to restore, whatever be the character of evil.

But further. The Lord considers those who are ignorant, who

have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak,

and also those

who have not this doctrine,

and lays upon them

none other burden {Rev. 2:24};

that is, I suppose, no further trial than the common suffering that had come upon all the assembly through these evil things. It is helpful to notice how the Lord thus distinguishes persons in the same assembly.

The faithful are cheered with the prospect of the Lord's coming, and are exhorted to hold fast till He come.

The overcomer is promised to share in the rule and reign of Christ over the nations, and to know as his own personal enjoyment what he now so ardently longs for —

the Morning Star {Rev. 2:28}.

This is now the blessed hope of our hearts, and for this we wait (Rev. 22:16).

Sardis

Dead formality generally characterized this assembly. Respectability in man's eye there might be, for they had

a name to live;

but, spiritually speaking, they were

dead {Rev. 3:1}.

Lamentable condition! With an orthodox confession and outward decency, there was a Christless, lifeless religion. This is very solemn, because some of the Lord's own people were, doubtless, involved in it. The Lord, therefore, is presented to them as the One who has all fullness of spiritual power, and gifts for edification,

having the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars {Rev. 3:1}.

He also exhorts them to

repent;

and seeks to restore, by enjoining them to remember how they have received and heard, and thus to

hold fast {Rev. 3:3};

for the way is cleansed only by taking heed thereto, according to God's word. They were exhorted also to be watchful, and to strengthen the things which remain, which are ready to die; and were reminded that like a dying branch brings no fruit to perfection, so their works, which were often begun well, were not ripened by patiently abiding in Christ.

It is well to notice that there were some exceptions to the general condition.

Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments {Rev. 3:4}.

This is cheering. It also shows us that whatever be the general state of the Church on earth, the Lord is ever ready to strengthen and lead on any who trust Him for it; and perhaps the more so because truth has so failed in the hands of those professing its care. Such are to expect special honor and blessing from the Lord —

They shall walk with me in white; for They are worthy {Rev. 3:4}.

Surely this is very encouraging. The Lord threatening to overtake the unrepenting — coming as a thief — does not refer to the Lord's personal return from heaven, but to His dealing with them. Living as they were in the spirit of the world, they would be treated like the world, and as of it, by the Lord's coming

as a thief {Rev. 3:3}.

Notwithstanding the failure, the overcomer is taught to expect the bridal dress —

white raiment {see Rev. 3:4},

to find his name in the book of life, and to be publicly owned by

Christ.

Philadelphia

Here there is no reproof. Though there is

little strength {Rev. 3:8},

and trial from false things — things of Satan around, yet the Lord was with them, and saw not a little to commend. Christ greatly encourages them. He reminds them that He is holy and true, that He has the key of David (authority and power in relation to the promises made to David and his throne),

that He openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth {Rev. 3:7}.

The frequent use of the word “my” in this address, “my word,” “my name,” “my patience,” “my God,” seems to show that they were remarkable for personal attachment to Christ Himself.

They kept Christ’s word. They not only read His word, but treasured it up in their hearts; often meditated on it, mixed faith with it, and esteemed it a precious treasure. This, I apprehend, is keeping His word. The Psalmist said:

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Psa. 119:11).

They also kept Christ’s name. They did not deny it. That name was above every name to them. They did not prostitute it for worldly purposes. To whatever bad things men now attach the name of Christ, these saints did not do so. It was sacred to them. They gathered together in His name, and felt something of the holy responsibilities connected with the confession of that name. They pleaded in prayer that name. They laboured in that name. They confessed that name. They well knew that at the name of Jesus every knee would yet bow, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father.

Christ assures them that He has set before them

an open door {Rev. 3:8},

and that, however they may be tried by those who are of the synagogue of Satan, yet no man can shut that door. He also promises that those who now distress them shall yet pay them honor, and know that He has loved them. This we judge will take place at our Lord’s appearing. He keeps bright before them His speedy return from heaven, and promises the keepers of His word of patience, deliverance from, or out of, the hour of temptation — the great tribulation that is coming upon all the world. He also exhorts them still to

hold fast {see Rev. 3:11}

what they have — His word and name — and to beware of men, who will seek to hinder, their devotedness and zeal for Christ, and rob them, not of

the crown of life,

which seems to be the portion of all believers, but of —

the crown of righteousness {2 Tim. 4:8},

which those may expect who love His appearing. Such can spend and be spent for His glory.

However weak and oppressed here, the overcomer is promised the place of strength and honor in the presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and write upon him the name of my God, etc. {see Rev. 3:12}

Laodicea

There is nothing to commend here. It is full of indecision and indifference —
neither cold nor hot {Rev. 3:15}.

Respectability before men, selfishness, worldly prosperity, and independence of Christ, characterized Laodicea. There was no felt need, and Christ was outside the door, obliged to knock for admission. He was ready to spue them out of His mouth. A terrible state, indeed, and yet a faithful picture of the conclusion of this dispensation. Christ presents Himself to them as

the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God {Rev. 3:14}

— the decided One, who always said Amen to God's word, and faithfully carried it out; and being the Head of the new creation, He is worthy of the affection and service of all His people, and is almighty to judge as well as to bless.

The Church of Smyrna was poor in earthly goods, but rich in faith. Laodicea was rich in earthly possessions, but most miserably poor spiritually. We have here an assembly which is content to have Christ outside the door. Is it possible? Alas! it is too true. Orthodox doctrine held inside, perhaps; but Christ Himself neither the object of the affections, nor practically owned as the Lord. They would have been ashamed to say so, but the fact was, they could get on very well without Christ's presence or power. This is fearful, but it is no uncommon sin of these last days. These elements seem now to be rapidly growing. Still Christ did not give Laodicea up. His patient grace as wonderfully brought out. He offers counsel, in case there should be one only in the whole assembly who hath an ear to hear. Get true riches, says He;

gold tried in the fire;

a priceless garment — the bridal dress,

white raiment;

and the only anointing that can profit you, spiritual unction —

Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see {Rev. 3:18}.

Then they would be “rich,” then their “nakedness” would be covered, then their “blind” eyes would see; for their hearts and minds would be fully set upon the beauty and work of Christ. Here alone true riches can be found. Happy those who can say,

“Jesus shall our treasure be,

Now and through eternity.”

The Lord chastens as many as He loves, to bring their hearts off these carnal, fading things to Himself, and says that if there be only one person in the whole assembly that will

open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me {Rev. 3:20}.

What blessed encouragement this is to any individual saint who desires to own and serve Christ fully in an evil time.

The overcomer is promised the highest thing that Christ can give — to sit with Him on His throne.

We now come to the end of the second part of the Revelation,

The things which are {Rev. 1:19}.

We have seen, in thus briefly considering the letters to the seven assemblies, all the general features of gradual declension and falling away that have marked the history of the Church on earth.

1. There was decline of affection to Christ.
2. Outward persecution.
3. Seduction and worldliness.
4. The mother of harlots — Popery.
5. Formality and deadness, with outward respectability, and a faithful few — Protestantism.
6. Revival of evangelical truth, effort for the glory of Christ, and obedience to His word.
7. Christless religion with worldly prosperity.

Can we doubt, then, that Christ gives us here a prophetic sketch of the course of the assembly on earth, that He furnishes us with instruction as to corporate and individual responsibility, and reveals His mind touching all the principles of good and evil brought before us?

In the next chapter we shall enter upon the things which shall be hereafter, or after these things. This division occupies the remainder of the book. It is subdivided into several sections. The first is, The throne of God in heaven, and the, Lamb taking the book.

Chapter 4

The apostle now writes the things which will succeed the course of the Assembly upon earth — the things which must be after these things {see Rev. 4:1}.

The scene is in heaven. God's throne is the center around which all is clustered. It is no longer Christ judging assemblies, but we see saints in heaven, and we have the counsels of God and the judgment of His throne in relation to the dwellers upon earth. The fourth and fifth chapters give us an introduction to the prophetic judgments. They may be read together; the former shows us the throne of God as Creator of all things, the latter the throne of God in relation to redemption. The Lamb is pronounced alone worthy to carry out the Divine counsels.

John says, After these things a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice — that is, the trumpet-like sound which called his attention to the vision in the first chapter — now says,

Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter,
or, more properly,
after these things {Rev. 4:1}.

The same words are translated
after these things,

in chapters 18:1 and 19:1, and are intended, I believe; to show us what takes place after those that are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23}

have left the earth. We do not get the taking up of the saints in the Revelation, because the distinctive calling of the Church is not the subject of the book: this is clearly taught in the epistles of Paul. After the Church of God has finished its course on earth, the saints are seen in heaven, in holy worship, and in immediate and unchanging connection with the throne of God.

We are again told that the apostle was
in the Spirit {Rev. 4:2},

to remind us that we need the anointed eye, and power of the Holy Ghost, to perceive anything according to the mind of God. May we, too, be "in the Spirit," while we further meditate on the deep things of God contained in this blessed book.

John says,

A throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne {Rev. 4:2}.

No account is given of Him who sat upon the throne, further than

He was like a jasper and a sardine stone {Rev. 4:3};

for no human language can describe the glory of the Majesty in the heavens. In the latter part of the book we have

the throne of God and of the Lamb {Rev. 22:1, 3.

The

rainbow round about the throne

bright and beautiful,

in sight like unto an emerald {Rev. 4:3},

tells us that the throne is set in relation to earth, and that He who set His bow in the cloud, as the token of the covenant that He would never again destroy the earth with water, is the faithful covenant-keeping God.

Before anything further is described, twenty-four elders are seen round about the throne, sitting on twenty-four seats or thrones. This is most blessed. They represent the heavenly saints

— those who

are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23}.

We see them as raised ones in glory, seated on thrones, in perfect rest and blessing. They sit on thrones, as having bodies, and are not disembodied spirits, as some have supposed. Their pilgrimage is ended. The fight of faith is over. The wilderness is passed. The race is run. Their course is finished. Having suffered with Christ, they now sit in kingly dignity, made nigh to God by His precious blood. Each has a golden crown, and sits covered with white raiment, and they all worship, and sing the new song. Whatever changes occur, their place is always near the throne, for this is their home. They are known as elders until the marriage of the Lamb, when we read of

the bride, the Lamb's wife {Rev. 21:9},

and also of the

blessed,

who are

called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb {Rev. 19:9}.

The throne is not, as it is now, a throne of grace, but of judgment, out of which proceed lightnings, and thunderings, and voices {Rev. 4:5}.

Before Jesus comes for His saints, God's throne is known as a mercy-seat, welcoming the chief of sinners to God through Jesus and His precious blood; and

"While the lamp holds out to burn,

The vilest sinner may return,"

for Jesus still says,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37},

etc. But when the last member of the

one new man {Eph. 2:15}

is called out and united to the risen Head in heaven, and the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, then the aspect of the throne changes, and God begins to assert His right to rule the universe, to chasten and judge men, and to clear the heavens and the earth for His Son — the rightful heir and Lord of all. When this is done, and millennial blessing established, then, instead of lightnings, and thunderings, and voices {Rev. 4:5}

coming out of the throne, there will be

a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb {Rev. 22:1}.

Judgment and curse then will be the exception rather than the rule. The fourth chapter, therefore, presents the aspect of God's throne to us as neither agreeing with the present nor millennial times, but it tells of a period of transition between the taking up of the heavenly saints, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth, by His personal return with His saints.

The seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God {Rev. 4:5},

are in strict keeping with the earthly character of the book: for it is not the Holy Ghost as one Spirit dwelling in the Church, as we get in Ephesians, but rather the manifold operations of God's Spirit through creation.

The sea of glass, like unto crystal {Rev. 4:6},

may show the solid and everlasting transparency and pity before God's throne in heaven. We may notice, that in this fourth chapter the sea of glass is unoccupied, but after Antichrist has been revealed, and those who would not worship the beast and his image are put to death, a company is seen standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God (Rev. 15:2), who get the victory, by resurrection.

The four beasts, or living creatures, are not introduced to us with the elders. We have first the elders described, then the characteristics of the throne, next the sea of glass, and then we are told that

in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts (or living creatures), full of eyes before and behind {Rev. 4:6}.

Unlike the elders, they bear no mark of redemption, and their occupation in connection with opening the seals, and the vials of wrath, mark them out, I would suggest, as a class of intelligent creatures who carry out the commands of God in His governmental and providential arrangements. They answer generally to the description of the seraphim that Isaiah beheld

hundreds of years before Christ came, when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. He says,

Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory (Isa. 6:2, 3).

And in our chapter we are told,

The four living creatures had each of them six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come {Rev. 4:8}.

How different the action of the twenty-four elders: they get off their thrones, fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created {Rev. 4:11}.

This is very blessed, for it tells us that God will be acknowledged and worshipped in heaven as the Creator of the universe, however blasphemed and denied on earth. The time is not far distant when men will not only worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, but will openly deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ; when infidelity and strong delusion will envelop men's minds, and the

mystery of iniquity {2 Thess. 2:7},

which now worketh, shall spread itself to a world-wide extent (Rev. 13:8). Then the words of Jesus will have their full accomplishment,

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).

Men will be given up to strong delusion. Nevertheless, God is, and He has created all things, and for His pleasure they are and were created. Thus the fourth chapter ends by showing us that God is worshipped in heaven as the sovereign Creator of all things. The fifth chapter ends by every creature praising and blessing God, and also the Lamb, because it is by the blood of His cross that creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

"Soon will creation join in one,

To bless the sacred name

Of Him who sits upon the throne,

And to adore the Lamb."

Chapter 5

The throne of God having been presented to us in the fourth chapter, in relation to creation, and God fully owned and worshipped in heaven as the sovereign Creator of all things, the fifth chapter opens with the announcement of a book seen in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals. A strong angel proclaims with a loud voice,

Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof? {Rev. 5:2}.

This question then discloses the solemn fact, that no one in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, had any worthiness or title for such work, nor even to look upon the book. No mere creature can meet God on the ground of worthiness, or lay claim or title to anything in His presence. The brightest and highest intelligences of God's creation have nothing but what they have received — no beauty but what God has put upon them — no righteousness but as formed by their Maker. The idea of worthiness is connected with something meritorious having been accomplished. The spotless angels, mighty in strength, which surround the throne of heaven, have no title to anything; for all they have is given. Not a single creature in the whole universe, then, was able to respond to the angel's question; and the discovery that no one could be found able even to look upon the book so filled the apostle's heart with grief, that he

wept much {Rev. 5:4}.

John did not see any one able to rescue creation out of the hands of the spoiler, or worthy to execute the judgments of God.

The elders, however, who had just been worshiping with adoring gratitude, and had sat calm and unmoved upon their thrones amid the lightnings, and thunderings, and voices, now manifest their spiritual intelligence; and we see it repeatedly in this book. They are acquainted with the mind of God. The question,

Who is worthy? {Rev. 5:2}

had long ago been settled in their minds. It had been their joy to take the crowns of gold from off their blood-washed brows, and, in lowly prostration, cast them before the throne. Great and wonderful as the work of God in creation was,

when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy {Job 38:7},

they knew that the stupendous work of eternal redemption would stand in unfading beauty when heaven and earth shall have passed away. The crucified but risen Son of God could alone answer the question of the strong angel. His sinner-loving, sacrificial death upon the cross makes known who is worthy. The unutterable sorrows of the Holy One, willingly

made to be sin for us {see 2 Cor. 5:21}

upon the tree, so fully glorified God, and redeemed sinful man, that He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and rightly exalted to the highest seat of dignity, power, and glory, that God could give. This tells us of One who is able and worthy to take the book of God's counsels, loose the seals, and execute God's judgments.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; . . . and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man (John 5:22, 27).

The rejected Messiah — the risen, glorified Son of man, then, is

Lord of all {Acts 10:36};

for He is worthy. This the elders well knew: one of them, therefore, called out to the distressed apostle, and said,

Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof {Rev. 5:5}.

The person of Christ is here blessedly set forth by the elder — His Godhead, as “the Root of David” — the Creator of all things; His manhood, as made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and of the tribe of Judah; mighty now as a lion to trample in His fury upon the prey, though once on earth the meek and lowly Lamb, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

It was to this blessed Jesus that the weeping apostle was directed; for whatever be the sorrow that oppresses our hearts, there is a balm in Jesus to relieve us. When John faints and quails at His feet, as we saw in the first chapter, it is knowing Jesus as the living One, who was dead and is alive again, and that for evermore, that revives and cheers him for his onward service. If tears of sorrow run plentifully over his cheeks, when he finds none worthy to even look upon the book in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne, it is a sight of Jesus that again dries up his tears. And so with us: we may be assured, that whatever makes us sad, it is only having to do with Jesus that can cheer and comfort us; and the contemplation of His spotless person, His finished work, His all-cleansing blood, His unchangeable priesthood, His sympathising heart, His almighty power, His advocacy in heaven, and His speedy coming, will calm our fears, comfort our hearts, elevate our minds, chase our sorrows, and fill us with hope. Nothing will compensate for a lack of personal communion with the Lord Jesus.

“From every stormy wind that blows,

From every swelling tide of woes,

There is a calm, a sweet retreat —

'Tis found before the mercy-seat.

“There is a place where Jesus sheds

The oil of gladness on our heads;

A place than all besides more sweet —

It is the heavenly mercy-seat”

John says,

I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain {Rev. 5:6};

showing us that it was by the blood that Jesus prevailed to open the book, and that the cross is so precious to God that He has transplanted it, as it were, to His own blessed presence in the midst of the throne of heaven. There the Lamb is seen

as it had been slain {Rev. 5:6},

not now in weakness, but in power; and that, too, in all the perfection of intelligence and wisdom, as we learn from His having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth {Rev. 5:6}. (Compare Zech. 4:10.)

Thus we see Christ, the

power of God and the wisdom of God {1 Cor. 1:24}, the Lion of the tribe of Juda {Rev. 5:5},

standing in the midst of the throne of heaven,

a Lamb as it had been slain; . . . and He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne {Rev. 5:6, 7}.

We must not forget that the scene is in heaven; Jesus is there, and the elders, representing the heavenly saints who have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air are also there, before the seals are opened, or one of the apocalyptic judgments poured out. Such a glorious event, then, as the Lamb's title to take the book being ratified at the throne of God, called all intelligences to fall down with adoring reverence, as indeed all creatures of the universe shall yet do; and the honor put upon the blood of the Lamb by the throne of judgment and justice was like a signal for the redeemed triumphantly to celebrate the work and worth of Jesus.

When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and-twenty elders fell down before THE LAMB {Rev. 5:8}.

Spotless Lamb! Precious blood of Christ! God only can fully estimate its value, or give to Jesus the glory and honor of which He is worthy. We who have felt the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and the guilt of a sinful heart, can in measure apprehend it; for we know that it was

"For love of us He bled,

And all in torture died;

'Twas love that bowed

His fainting head,

And oped His gushing side."

A beloved brother says,

It is by His blood the Lamb here prevails to take the book, or the title to the inheritance. The Lion of the tribe of Judah is seen in the person of the Lamb that was slain. His blood was His title. His

blood made Him the purchaser of the inheritance; He is now its redeemer, as the prevailing Lion of Judah. And consequently, as the Lamb, He is the spring and fountain of all the resulting glories of the kingdom. Extensive virtues of the blood of Jesus! It has been the object of faith — the ground of worship — the title of security — the bond of covenants — from the beginning. By it Abel was an accepted worshiper, and even Adam himself a believing reconciled sinner. By it Abraham had the covenant of promise made with him. By it the people of the Lord dwelt safe while the sword of judgment passed over. By it the veil of the temple was rent — all distance between God and sinners removed. By it the trumpet of the jubilee might give forth its gladdening notes; for on the day of atonement they were to sound it. By it the saints redeemed from earth, and seated in heaven, look to return and reign over the earth, in the train and honour of that slain Lamb, whose blood, but whose blood only, has all this prevalency in it.

Thus, there is no blessing or dignity, nothing of either grace or glory, which this blood cannot command for us poor sinners; but there is no other price for anything, no other ground or title for blessing but itself. It does everything, and it does it alone. Adam lost both himself and his estate; he became a sinner in his own person, and also an exile from Eden. But the blood of Jesus, God's Lamb that was slain, restores all. Both the living creatures and elders fall down before the Lamb; but

having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints {Rev. 5:8},

we understand to be expressive of the elders only. Some have judged, from the living creatures and elders appearing both to sing as redeemed ones, that the both companies together represent the heavenly saints. If it were so, it is still clear that the Church would be removed before the apocalyptic judgments begin, or the Man of sin is revealed; for the living creatures are not only officially engaged at the opening of the first four seals (Rev. 6:1-8), but also, in Rev. 15, we find one of them giving seven vials to the seven angels, and the first is poured out upon the earth in judgment on those who had the mark of the beast, and worshipped his image (Rev. 16:2).

The living creatures, however, in no other part of the Revelation bear any mark of redemption; and in this chapter, after all have been ascribing praise to God and the Lamb,

the four living creatures said, Amen {Rev. 5:14}.

Not only too are they generally seen in separate action from the elders, but, as we have noticed, assist in carrying out the judgments on the earth; and, instead of manifesting the discernment and worship characteristic of the elders (except in Rev. 19, when God is worshipped, not for His redeeming love, but for judging the great whore), they repeat incessantly the cry,

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty {Rev. 4:8}!

That they are created beings, and not mere symbolic expressions of the attributes of God, we judge from their giving thanks to God, falling down, giving vials to the angels, and corresponding so nearly to the seraphim of Isaiah, the living creatures of Ezekiel, and the cherubim that guarded the tree of life with a flaming sword.

The elders, however, who are not disembodied spirits, but have glorified bodies, remind us constantly of redemption. They have crowns, they sit on thrones, are worshipers, clothed in white

raiment, abide near the throne of God, and are characterized by spiritual intelligence; for they know who is worthy to open the book, who they are that come out of the great tribulation, and give thanks when the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

We suggest, then, that the elders only

sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation {Rev. 5:9}.

Thus we see that death is remembered where death cannot enter. It is generally admitted that the 10th verse should be altered to —

And hast made them unto our God kings and priests, or a kingdom of priests; and they shall reign upon the earth (Rev. 5:10): {and made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth {Rev. 5:10, New Trans., JND}}.

that is, the elders are in heaven, the prayers of Jewish saints (Dan. 7:21) on earth have ascended to the throne, and are as vials or bowls full of incense, and, though now in trouble, they shall yet be a kingdom of priests, according to Exod. 19:6, and reign upon the earth.

As God has always had a witness in the earth, we expect that soon after the heavenly saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, God's Spirit will begin to inspire a remnant among the nation with a proper Jewish hope, and move them to resume the preaching of "the gospel of the kingdom"; and it is those who are referred to here. I say, resume the preaching of "the gospel of the kingdom"; for though it was preached by our Lord and the twelve, as recorded in Matt. 10, and was interrupted, yet it must be preached as a witness to all nations before the end come (Matt. 24:14), that is, the end of the age, when the Lord will come with His saints.

Myriads of angels, forming a circle outside those who have just been singing, also say with a loud voice.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing {Rev. 5:12}.

They do not say, who redeemed us, but ascribe seven-fold worthiness to Him who died upon the cross. The circle of praise still widens. The vision leads the apostle on into the millennial time, when the result of Christ's death will be known and celebrated by every creature, when everything that hath breath will praise the Lord. The chapter concludes with the "Amen" of the four living creatures, and the worship of the four-and-twenty elders.

The praise and worship and testimony of all creatures connected with heaven and earth to the glory of God and the Lamb, are brought out on the Lamb's taking the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

"Joyful now, the full creation

Rests in undisturbed repose;

Blest in Jesus' full salvation,

Sorrow now, nor thraldom knows.”

The next chapter opens to us the loosing of the seals, and the results.

Chapters 6 and 8:1-5: the Opening of the Seven Seals {Introduction}

We must beware lest the study of prophecy serve only to amuse the intellect. This is man's way of abusing God's revelation of the future. Unfolded to us by the Spirit, the knowledge of the future sheds an important light on the present, and we see all in connection with our Lord Jesus. This separates us unto God. It draws the affections and desires to heaven — to Christ. As the Cross of Christ is the outflowing of all blessing from God to man, so Christ exalted and coming again is the center of all prophetic teaching. Prophecy is connected with Christ, and therefore concerns us, for we are His. They who know this see all prophecy in relation to Christ. We are only happy in tracing the prophetic word step by step in companionship with Him to whom all must bow, and thus the affections and desires are attracted to the Lord Himself. Watchfulness, then, is needed, as well as prayerfulness, lest we tread these holy paths with the mind of a politician, rather than with the heart of an adoring worshiper of our blessed Lord Jesus.

Before entering upon the Apocalyptic seals, let us look at some other Scriptures which seem to me to bear upon this part of the Revelation.

The well-known prophecy of Daniel's seventy weeks has not yet been fully accomplished. The sixty-ninth week terminated with the cutting off of Messiah (Dan. 9:26). We read that

seventy weeks (or hebdomads) are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city {Dan. 9:24}.

The prophecy, therefore, refers to Daniel's people — the Jewish nation, and the city of Jerusalem. The Church of God is not found here. One week only — the seventieth — remains to be accounted for, and observe, it comes in after the rejection of Christ, because he was

cut off {Dan. 9:26}

at the end of the sixty-ninth week. This one week — one seven, hebdomad, or seven years — is divided into two halves. For he [the prince, Dan. 9:26] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week, i.e. at the end of three years and a half, or forty and two months,

he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate {Dan. 9:27}.

This, then, is Daniel's prophecy concerning his own people, of the last of the seventy weeks. Now, judicial blindness rests upon that people. Having killed the heir, God's beloved Son, He has not only burned up their city, but has scattered them over the face of the earth, until the elect from the Gentiles are fully gathered in to God. Though natural branches be broken off, God is able to graft them in again, and so all Israel shall be saved; for they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. Prior to that, this seventieth week must have its accomplishment; for the sorrow, distress, and the abomination that maketh desolate, must precede the nation's blessing. It is, therefore, between

the sixty-ninth and this retarded seventieth week that the calling out of the Church takes place. Paul says it is a

mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations {Col. 1:26},

and was

not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit {Eph. 3:5}.

It is no marvel, then, that Daniel should make no mention of the Church, and that his prophecy should refer to his own people. Christ being rejected by Israel, and received at the right hand of God as

the firstborn from the dead {Col. 1:18},

the firstborn among many brethren {Rom. 8:29},

we get a new order of God's actings; viz. the Holy Ghost is come down to indwell and baptize believers into one body, in union with an ascended Christ, whom God gave to be

Head over all things to the Church, which is His body {Eph. 1:22, 23}.

This action of the Holy Ghost goes on till every member of the

one new man {Eph. 2:15}

is called out, till we all come unto a PERFECT MAN. Then the Lord Jesus will come and receive us unto Himself. After this, the Lord will turn again to His ancient people and city, fulfilling Daniel's seventieth week, with all its sorrows, and at His appearing in glory bring in the full restoration and blessing of the nation. (Compare Acts 15:14-17.)

The question may be fairly asked, Do we get any allusion to this seventieth week in any of our Lord's discourses? I reply, Is it likely that a period of such importance to Israel would be unnoticed by our Lord in His intercourse with that people? Let us turn to the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. At the end of the twenty-third chapter, Messiah is virtually

cut off {Dan. 9:26}.

He says,

O Jerusalem . . . how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate! For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord {Matt. 23:37-39}.

As to the city, the beautiful temple must be razed to the ground; for God must now deal with his people in solemn chastisement.

There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down {Matt. 24:2}.

The disciples then say,

Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age? {Matt. 24:3}.

Where, I ask, should we expect a prophetic discourse parallel to the seventieth week of Daniel, to fit in so well as here? for it begins with Messiah virtually “cut off,” and ends with Messiah coming in power and great glory (Matt. 24:30), to put all enemies under His feet, which we know, from other Scriptures, occurs at the end of this week (2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 19:11). If this view be correct, we should expect to see some corresponding points between Daniel’s prophecy and our Lord’s discourse: and so we do. The prophet speaks of the Man of sin, desolation, and abomination, until the consummation. Our Lord, after speaking of false Christs and sorrows, mentions

the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Matt. 24:15),

followed by Christ’s personal return in glory, and the redemption of Israel, as the parable of the fig-tree suggests. Moreover, while we are distinctly told that Daniel speaks of his own people, our Lord gives locality to his prophecy, by saying,

Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains (Matt. 24:16):

and we may say of nationality also, for it is followed by,

Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day {Matt. 24:20}.

There seems, then, good reason for identifying our Lord’s prophetic discourse, in Matt. 24:1-30, with the seventieth week of Daniel; and there are also remarkable points of similarity between this chapter in Matthew and the seven seals of the Revelation. The prophetic incidents, and also the order of their narration, strikingly coincide. In Matt. 24 we have:

1. False Christs, deceiving many.
2. Wars, and rumours of wars.
3. Famines.
4. Pestilences.
5. Afflictions, many killed, and the gospel of the kingdom preached.
6. The sun darkened, the moon not shining, the powers of the heavens shaken.
7. The sign of the Son of man in heaven, and His coming in the clouds with power and great glory.

In the seven seals of Revelation we have:

1. The emblem of the false Christ having great power and success.
2. War — peace taken from the earth.
3. Famine.
4. Death, and hell following.
5. Souls under the altar crying for vengeance, for being killed for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held.

6. The sun black, the moon red, stars falling, and the heavens departing.

7. Silence in heaven, voices, lightnings, and an earthquake, connected, as I believe, with our Lord's personal return to the earth with His mighty angels, in flaming fire.

The seven seals being opened may co-extend with the contents of the whole book which the Lamb took out of the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne; and if so, whatever period of this time the trumpets and vials occupy, they may be regarded as terminating at the same time— the personal return of Christ with His saints in judgment. The end, therefore, of each of these series of judgments would be very similar; and so it is. The seventh seal is connected with

thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake (Rev. 8:5);

the seventh trumpet is also marked by

lightnings, and voices and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail (Rev. 11:19);

and the seventh vial has also

voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake (Rev. 16:18).

It is remarkable also, that at the termination of each series there is reference made to the temple of God in heaven. It is quite true that we do not get the temple mentioned in the seventh seal, but we find some of the well-known furniture of the temple spoken of, such as the altar, censer, incense (Rev. 8:3). At the sound of the seventh trumpet, it is said that

the temple of God was opened in heaven (Rev. 11:19);

and when the seventh vial was poured out, we are told,

There came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, saying, It is done (Rev. 16:17).

There are reasons, then, for considering the seven sealed book to contain all the apocalyptic judgments, and to embrace the whole period from the lamb's taking the book till the heavens are opened, and Christ comes forth in royal majesty and power to put all enemies under His feet. We must not forget that the "elders," or heavenly saints, are sitting on thrones in heaven in glorified bodies, before the Lamb takes the book or opens one of the seals. It is well also to observe, that the elders do not appear in connection with opening the sea's, but the living creatures only are engaged in the first four of these sorrowful enactments. We afterwards see one of them also occupied in giving to the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God (Rev. 15:7); and

the first being poured out, there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them that worshipped his image (Rev. 16:2).

Beloved in the Lord, these solemn realities will soon come to pass. How terrible the thought, that living men and women around us shall so shortly feel the hand of God in judgment. Now God bears with man's wickedness, and preaches peace, through the blood of Christ, to the vilest of sinners; but then He will begin His strange work, and make men feel that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. How godly and earnest with souls a consideration of these things should make us!

The First Seal

The rider here has been thought by many to be Christ, because He is sitting upon a white horse, and is so successful. Hence they speak of the Lord's now going forth in His gospel chariot conquering and to conquer. Blessed be God, Christ does subdue proud and rebellious hearts to Himself; but it is not by the bow, or any other carnal weapon, but by

the word of His grace {Acts 14:3, 20:32}

It is His love, His redeeming, exhaustless love! This, this alone subdued and won us to Himself; and

"True pleasures abound

In the rapturous sound;

And whoever hath found it

Hath Paradise found.

My Jesus to know,

And feel His love flow,

'Tis life everlasting,

'Tis heaven below."

That the rider in this first seal cannot be Christ is further proved, because He is seen as having His place in heaven, at this very time, as the Lamb opening the seal, while the vision of the white horse and its rider relates to the earth. It is quite true, that when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, He is presented to us as riding a white horse: but then heaven will be opened; He will be publicly manifested; there will be no possibility of mistaking Him; for

every eye shall see Him {Rev. 1:7}.

His saints also will follow in the train; and judgments under the iron rod of the Lord's personal reign will go forth. Whereas the opening of the other seals that follow this one show that the judgments are of a providential character, and not immediately from the Lord's own presence.

When the Lamb in heaven opens this seal, a

noise of thunder

is heard, for it is God dealing in righteousness, not in grace; and one of the living creatures says,

Come and see {Rev. 6:1}!

or rather,

Come,

and not

Come and see;

that is, one of the living creatures calls the rider on a white horse, and he immediately appears on the scene. The seer then says,

I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer {Rev. 1:2}.

This is evidently a mighty subduing power put forth in the earth, and not only successful, but increasingly so; and accomplished not in man's ordinary mode of overcoming, as by the sword, but by the exertion of a more quiet yet more powerful influence. He is shown as having a crown given unto him, not many diadems of power and glory, which Jesus will wear when He is revealed from heaven, but a wreath, a chaplet, such as men award to each other, like the conqueror's wreath at the public games.

The question is, What does this mean? May it not be the mighty, subduing anti-christian power which is to arise after the Church has been removed? The apostle Paul speaks of something now hindering the full development of the

mystery of iniquity {2 Thess. 2:7};

but when the hindrance is removed,

then shall that wicked [or lawless] one be revealed . . . whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders {2 Thess. 2:8, 9}

By the rider on the white horse, then, in this first seal, we understand the mighty anti-christian deceiving and subduing power which our Lord foretold:

There shall arise false Christs, and shall deceive many {see Matt. 24:24}.

He rides not only a horse, the emblem of power in the earth; but as Satan always tries to deceive men by imitating God, this rider is on a white horse, because Christ will be symbolized as on a white horse; as Christ will appear wearing many crowns or diadems, this great deceiving power will have a crown given to it; and as Christ will subdue all to Himself, this mimic of Satan will go forth conquering and to conquer; and, alas!

with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.

Then God will send men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Then will our Lord's words be fulfilled:

If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive {John 5:43}.

What a solemn lesson this reads us; for we are told that

the mystery of iniquity doth already work {2 Thess. 2:7}.

It is around us on almost every side! How important to distinguish now between truth and error, between the holy principles and ways of Christ, and the mimicry and counterfeits of Satanic deception. Surely Satan is the deceiver of the world, as well as the accuser of the brethren. How we need to abide in God's presence at the blood-sprinkled mercy seat! How much we require of the anointing with spiritual eye-salve, to distinguish between things which differ! How we need to visit Calvary, and to feed on the flesh and blood of the Son of man, to be strengthened against the devil's cheats! Let none of us suppose that bare knowledge of the letter of Scripture is enough for this. Nothing less than abiding in the love of God — communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ — will enable us to keep our garments unspotted from the world, or to avoid the snares of the fowler. May God graciously use the knowledge of these

things which must shortly come to pass {Rev. 1:1},

to make us watchful, prayerful, earnest, and humble saints!

The Second Seal

Here we have another rider, but the horse is red, indicative of a blood-shedding power. Now God is revealing Himself to sinful men as the God of peace. He commands the gospel of His grace to be preached to every creature, and saves to the uttermost all that come unto Him by Christ; but then peace will be taken from the earth, a mighty influence will be exerted by the sword, and men will slay one another. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. It is a time of

wars and rumours of wars {Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7},

but the end of the age is not yet. Now we feel what a mercy outward peace is, however men deceive and flatter themselves with cries of peace and safety; then, alas! when the

great sword {Rev. 6:4}

is put into the hand of this representative warrior, peace will be taken from the earth, and men will kill and slay one another. Surely this forcibly reminds us how dependent we are on God, for outward peace!

The Third Seal

Now follows what we might expect — God's judgment in the way of scarcity or famine. It is a further scene of mourning and sorrow, as indicated by a black horse, and the rider having a pair of balances in his hand. The voice in the midst of the four living creatures says,

A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny {Rev. 6:6}:

this shows a dearth or scarcity of the staff of life. "A penny," or denarius, would be the amount of a labourer's daily earnings, and "a measure of wheat," or a chœnix of wheat, the smallest daily allowance granted to a slave. It has been thought by some, that because the barley and wheat harvests are earlier than the ingathering of the fruit of the vine and olive, this judgment of dearth would be limited to the two former; and therefore it is said,

Hurt not [or injure not] the oil and the wine {Rev. 6:6}.

However this may be, it is clear that we are to understand that it is a scarcity of the necessities of life, a time of famine.

The Fourth Seal

The judgments increase in severity. When the fourth seal is opened, a pale horse appears, its rider is Death, and Hell follows. This is very appalling: Death and Hell, or Hades, are afterwards cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). The different colored horses and riders are clearly symbolic of a general character of things rather than of individuals. This fourth seal brings out God's

four sore judgments

as Ezekiel calls them, over a limited portion of the earth. Ezekiel, however, speaks of them in relation to Israel:

For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast (Ezek. 14:21).

What we are to understand by the judgments of this fourth seal being limited to a

fourth part of the earth {Rev. 6:8}

I know not; but it is terrible to think what power and authority will then be given to Death and Hades, to kill

with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth {Rev. 6:8}.

It is a time of distress of nations, with perplexity, of famines and pestilences in divers places; and these are but

the beginning of sorrows {Matt. 24:8}.

Thus we see, after the saints have been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming, and are seated on thrones in heaven, as represented by the twenty-four elders, that the first four seals are opened, and we have a mighty subduing antichristian power, war, famine, and God's

four sore judgments.

They are not extraordinary in their character, but preparatory dealings of God before the wrath of the Lamb. We may notice that in each of these four seals, one of the four living creatures is officially engaged, which is not the case in the opening of the other three.

The Fifth Seal

This seal discloses something very different. It is a distinct notice, that there have been saints on the earth since the rapture, some of whom have yielded up their lives as sacrifices to God for the truth's sake. The apostle John says,

I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held {Rev. 6:9}.

This is very solemn. The removal of the saints from earth to heaven at the coming of the Lord, though it excite alarm and distress for a time, does not improve mankind. Soon again the enmity of the carnal mind is manifested; for His servants with a new testimony are martyred for the word of God.

We saw, in the fifth chapter, that some persons were praying on earth, while the elders were in heaven, having bowls full of incense, which are said to be

the prayers of saints {Rev. 5:8}:

Though "saints," these are not "the Church," indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and baptized into "one body"; but after the Church has been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming, the Spirit of God will move the hearts of a remnant of Israel — not all Israel, but a few, who have the hope of Messiah's coming, and pray for the kingdom to be set up of which prophets prophesied. These will be God's witnesses in the earth, who will go out among the Gentiles,

and declare the gospel of the kingdom {Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Mark 1:14}

among all nations. This will be their

testimony {Rev. 6:9},

and their authority, that which the Holy Spirit always gives

the word of God {Rev. 6:9}.

They will witness to Messiah's coming to deliver His people Israel, and to reign as King over all the earth. We now wait for God's Son from heaven, to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord; but they who are on the earth after this rapture will wait for Messiah coming in glory as Deliverer of Israel, to sit on the throne of David, reign before His ancients gloriously, and, like the true Solomon, bring in by judgment and power the promised day of the Lord, when all the earth shall be filled with His glory. This is the hope proper to a godly Jew. The difference in the two expectations is obvious. The former agrees with a heavenly standing, citizenship, and union with Christ ascended, as members of His body; the latter is consistent with those whose promise is blessing in the earth, and is suited to such when they are groaning under persecution, and sighing for present deliverance on earth, according to God's promises to Abraham and his seed. The two expectations will be clear to those who carefully read and compare the last chapter of Malachi with

the last chapter of Revelation.

Those in the fifth seal, then, clearly do not belong to the Church. The altar reminds us of the temple. Their cry is not for mercy on their enemies, but for vengeance. This, too, shows us that they are on Jewish ground. The Church of God is taught to love her enemies, and, like Jesus, to cry,

Father forgive them {Luke 23:34};

or, like Stephen on behalf of his murderers,

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge {Acts 7:60}.

Whereas these disembodied souls under the altar cry with a loud voice,

How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? {Rev. 6:10}.

Many judgments had been poured out from the hand of God on opening the previous seals, but their blood had not been avenged; and it may be that their cry brings out the fearful signs and wonders, terror, distress, earthquakes, and lightnings, of the two next seals, and the terrible wrath that will be inflicted by the personal revelation of Christ Himself. Their cry, then, may hasten His revelation from heaven, in flaming fire to take vengeance, etc. His Church will accompany Him; for when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

These “souls” had been God’s witnesses in the earth. In the face of frowning infidelity and ignorance, they contended that the earth belonged to God, and that the feet of Messiah would soon stand on the Mount of Olives, and all the earth be in subjection to Him. Like the experience of those in the book of Psalms, they expect God to judge and avenge in the earth, whereas we simply wait for God’s Son from heaven to take us to Himself.

These martyred ones know full well that vengeance will come, that God will make inquisition for blood, and judge

righteously in the earth; but it seems long to wait, and they cry, “How long?”

God answers their cry at once, by giving to each of them a white robe, in token of their standing in acceptance before Him, and by telling them that they must rest for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren should be killed as they were. This we find described in Rev. 13:7. It is well to see that the Lord calls them

brethren {Rev. 6:11};

and those who are spoken of as suffering, in Matt. 25:40, are also called “brethren,” which seems to refer to the same class and period.

These “souls,” having lost by faithful testimony their looked- for inheritance on earth, have it more than made up by living and reigning with Christ in the first resurrection. This is brought out in Rev. 20:4, where they are spoken of as

beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.

The Sixth Seal

God's promise, that He will yet shake, not the earth only, but also heaven, leads us to expect a great convulsion, both in the heavenly and earthly divisions of the created universe. We know, also, from Scripture, that the time will come when

the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up {2 Pet. 3:10}.

The present earth and heaven shall flee away before the face of Him who will sit on the great white throne, and no place shall be found for them. This will be followed with

new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (see 2 Pet. 3:10, 13; Rev. 20:11).

Again, Paul, in writing to the Hebrews on the Godhead of the Son, quotes from the 102nd Psalm to show that He endures after this present creation-scene shall have passed away.

Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture, shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail {Heb. 1:10-12}.

We are thus taught to expect the passing away of the present heaven and earth, which we know will take place at the close of the millennium; but, prior to that, we look for terrible convulsions and changes; for God hath declared by His prophet Joel,

I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come {Joel 2:30, 31}.

Our Lord Himself, also, when asked what would be the sign of His coming to Israel, when they shall say,

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord (Matt. 23:39, and 24:3),

replied,

The sun shall 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 {Matt. 24:29, 30}.

Our Lord also said;

There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations; with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken (Luke 21:25, 26).

Thus we see that terrible shaking, both of the heaven and earth, will not only take place before our Lord is revealed, but that it will be of such duration that men will have time to fear, and to look for what further is coming.

We are not surprised, then, to find in the Apocalypse, when the Lamb opened the sixth seal, that

Lo! there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together [or, the heaven was removed as a book rolled up]; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places, etc. {Rev. 6:12:14}.

It seems to me that these changes, whether physical or political, take place not long before the Lord is visibly revealed from heaven. We must remember that at this period infidelity is thriving in the earth, man is deified, and the only Lord God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, is denied. In this way, we can understand how God will rebuke and confound the wisdom of the wise by such terrible commotions.

Men will be greatly alarmed and distressed at the actions of the sixth seal; but it is not the actual coming of the Lord, though they say so; for the seventh seal has yet to be loosed. At this time we find,

The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for [mark, they say,] the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? {Rev. 6:15-17}.

The fear and distress of men are plainly marked in this scene; but after this, though it may be a very short time after, when the Lord is actually revealed, men are in a different mind; alarm and fear seem to have passed off, and infidelity to have usurped its place in their hearts; for they are in full league with the Man of Sin against Christ. With reference to that awful time, it is said,

I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army {Rev. 19:19}.

Then men will be bold indeed in their antagonism to the Lamb, instead of being overwhelmed with anguish and terror, as at the time of the sixth seal.

Whatever physical changes may take place at the opening of the sixth seal, it is clear that the falling of the stars from heaven unto the earth, and the heaven departing as a scroll rolled together, before the appearing of our Lord, have a symbolic meaning. There may be reference to the fall of bright and distinguished personages, the breaking up of ecclesiastical powers and governments, and the shaking of everything that man tries to rest and glory in; but whatever it be, it clearly fills the minds of those dwelling on the earth with extreme terror and distress, and causes great alarm at the thought of the Lamb coming in wrath.

The Seventh Seal

We pass on now to the beginning of the eighth chapter, to notice the last of the seals, because we regard the seventh chapter as a parenthesis; that is, not containing events which, in their occurrences, come in between the sixth and seventh seals, but which may take place during other parts of the apocalyptic period.

The seventh seal discloses to us the unfolding of the last roll of the prophetic book that was in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne, and, I suggest, has its accomplishment, together with the last trumpet and last vial, in ushering in the personal revelation of the Lord from heaven, when the prophetic word will be fulfilled:

The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee (Zech. 14:5).

We do not expect lightnings and thunderings after Christ is manifested, but we find, in Rev. 19 where an account of Christ's glorious appearing is given, it is said,

I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth {Rev. 19:6}.

We are told that when he had opened the seventh seal,

there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour {Rev. 8:1}.

There have been many conjectures about what this "silence in heaven" can mean; but there has been no better thought suggested, perhaps, than that of all intelligences in heaven standing in solemn awe at the fact, that the Lord Himself was now about to go forth in flaming fiery vengeance, to judge the world in righteousness, and to put all enemies under His feet. We can understand "silence in heaven," I think, under such unparalleled circumstances.

John also saw

seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets; and another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake {Rev. 8:2-5}.

"The altar," and "fire of the altar," clearly show it to be the altar of burnt offering; whilst an angel-priest standing at the golden altar, using the censer, and burning the incense, gives acceptance to "the prayers of the saints." These points invite our attention to a scene in connection with those who are on Jewish ground. It is remarkable, too, that the one who is seen acting as High Priest is not presented as a partaker of flesh and bones, but as an angel. No doubt it is Jesus the Lord, whom Israel will know, for He is a Priest for ever,

after the order of Melchizedec {Psa. 110:4}.

The Church of God now knows Jesus as her great High Priest, compassionate, merciful, faithful, and sympathizing, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; who intercedes for us and loves us as His own flesh and bone. This priestly intercession of Jesus will not be needed by us, as it is now, when we are glorified with Him, though we shall always know Him as a blessing priest; but those in Israel who do turn to Jehovah, and look for their Messiah, will need a priestly intercessor to present their groans and cries to God. Jesus will be both King and Priest to Israel. A praying people on earth, after the taking up of the heavenly saints, has been noticed in Rev. 5:8, and also in Rev. 6:10, where we see the character of their prayers as that of calling on God for vengeance. In this 8th chapter, God is known, we judge, as regarding the sighing of these poor and needy ones, and as having provided a faithful High-Priest in Jesus for them. He presents their prayers with incense from the golden censer, and in answer, it appears, the censer is filled with the fire of the altar — that consuming fire — and cast into the earth; and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake are the result, — accompanied or followed, if I mistake not, by the personal return of Christ in fiery vengeance: for He will avenge His own elect speedily. It seems as if the cry of an oppressed remnant will be the means of bringing Christ Himself to judge the world in righteousness, and of bringing His beloved nation into its long-promised rest and blessing.

Though the seven angels are seen here with trumpets, it does not follow that their several actions do not begin before the seventh seal is opened. John says he saw them, and he also saw them in Rev. 7:1-3, and heard commands given to them. For reasons previously given, the seals, trumpets, and vials, seem to be synchronous in their termination. Neither should I suppose that the priesthood of the Lord for His afflicted and oppressed ones only actually began when the seventh seal was opened. John seems to have seen it when the seventh scroll was unfolded; and in relating the different visions we find in this book, while some events are recorded in chronological order, others are not: for instance, at the end of the fifth chapter we are taken into the millennium, and in the following chapter brought back again; at the end of the eleventh chapter we are taken to the close of the millennium, and the twelfth begins with the incarnation of Christ.

The fourteenth chapter also takes us to an event after the Lord's personal return, when He will tread the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God; and afterwards we are brought back again. There are other instances of a similar character. As we go through the Revelation, a series of pictures or visions pass before the eye, each perfect in itself, but the several pictures do not follow each other in distinct sequence as to order of fulfilment.

It may be said that the parallel of the seventh seal is not found in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, which we have considered as giving us a prophetic sketch of the seventieth week of Daniel, or the apocalyptic period, which we understand the seven seals to include. True, it is not so plainly referred to as the other six seals are; but as we have the sixth seal distinctly brought out in the 29th verse of that chapter, and the mourning of the tribes predicted by Zechariah (chap. 12:10), and the gathering of the elect of Israel, which we know will be after the Lord's personal revelation in the clouds of heaven, in the following verses, the seventh seal, trumpet, and vial, will be prior to this. We conceive therefore, that it will come so speedily after the commotions of the sixth seal, that we must leave room for the seventh seal, and we are inclined to connect it with the first line of the 30th verse:

Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven {Matt. 24:30}.

Chapter 7: the Parenthesis Between the Sixth and Seventh Seals

This chapter is a remarkable break in this inspired book. Judgment after judgment on men living on the earth has passed before us; and while the heart has been saddened at the tales of woe which the opening of the various seals has brought out, this chapter seems introduced to remind us that

mercy rejoices against judgment {see James 2:13}.

As on former occasions, so now, God's electing love comes in to spare, when all would otherwise terminate in misery and woe.

The terror and distress of men, crying to mountains and rocks to fall on them, had just passed before the eye of the apostle; and the seventh seal, with its thunderings and lightnings, is stayed for a little, while John sees that there is mercy for some on the earth, amidst all the terrible outpourings of divine judgments. The seventh chapter, then, must be regarded as a parenthesis, not having its fulfilment between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, but presented to the apostle after the sixth seal,

[After these things I saw {Rev. 7:1},]

to show that God yet remembers mercy to many on the earth. Two gracious scenes are here opened up to us; one in relation to Israel, the other comprehending Gentiles —

persons of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues {see Rev. 7:9}.

Now we have three classes in the world spoken of in Scripture — Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. After the Church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air, we shall have again only Jews and Gentiles on earth. As we have repeatedly noticed, God begins again to deal with his ancient people Israel, and Jesus acts as their Melchizedec High-Priest; this makes it probable that this election and sealing of the twelve tribes may take place early in the apocalyptic period. The latter vision of this chapter must have its fulfilment during the persecuting power of “the man of sin,” when every one is threatened with death who will not fall down and worship the beast.

It would seem as if four of the seven angels which have the seven trumpets have a mission in relation to the earth, the sea, and trees. They are presented as standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. Another angel, having the seal of the living God, ascends from the east or sun-rising (the source of blessing), and cries with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying,

Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads {Rev. 7:3}.

The judgment of these angels must be suspended until the sealing has taken place. These sealed ones are the special objects of God's care; for when the fifth angel sounds, the locusts which

come out of the bottomless pit are commanded that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads (Rev. 9:4).

Some have thought, that the angel with the seal is Christ, but we should judge it not to be so; first, because he says,

Till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads {Rev. 7:3};

and, secondly, because angelic agency is almost always exercised in acts of mercy, as well as judgment, towards those who stand in relation to the earth, or to the kingdom at the end of the age. The Church waits for Christ Himself. His promise is,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself {John 14:3};

but angels will gather the scattered tribes from the four winds (Matt. 24:31), and angels will bind the tares in bundles, and gather the wheat into the barn, as also sever the wicked from among the just. I need, perhaps, scarcely say, that the catching up of the saints is not a severing of the wicked from among the just, but a separation of the saints from among the wicked, and will have taken place before the end of this present age (Matt. 13:49).

The number of Israelites sealed is an hundred and forty and four thousand; twelve thousand out of each of the twelve tribes. They are marked and set apart for blessing in the earth, according to the election of grace, before the judgments are enacted. The fleshly order, therefore, is not observed; hence Judah, and not Reuben, heads the list; for blessing on the ground of mercy can only be by Him who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root and Offspring of David. Instead of Dan, we have Manasses. There have been many conjectures why Dan is omitted. Some have thought it is because the tribe of Dan has been so mixed up with idolatry; others, because they suppose that "the man of sin" will be a Danite; but as the hundred and forty and four thousand is an election from Israel, these reasons cannot be entertained for a moment; and we believe that the difficulty is only solved by

even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight {Matt. 11:26; Luke 10:21}.

Where the ten tribes are now, no man knows; but God's eye is upon them, and however they may be scattered, He is able to bring them forth again in His own time (Matt. 24:31). It is remarkable, that when the land is again divided, Dan's lot is mentioned first (Ezek. 48:1). We may notice also that the tribes are sealed with the seal of the living God, which intimates their security and preservation in time of judgment and death. Their standing before God is that of "servants," not "sons," or members of the body of Christ, as we are. Our blessings are in the heavenlies in Christ; Israel's portion is blessing in the earth.

Not only must preparatory judgments have been poured out, but the time of the great tribulation must have set in, before the second action of this chapter, the salvation of the innumerable multitude, can have its accomplishment. The Church having been completed and removed, God again deals with Jews and Gentiles as such; therefore we have in the former part of the chapter a certain number of Jews sealed, and in the latter part a separate company of Gentiles saved as such, who came out of the great tribulation, and are brought by the blood of the Lamb to stand before the throne of God. It is not the idea of "one body," a limited number of members, as is

indicated by the “one new man,” but an innumerable multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. Their position of victory, with palms in their hands, shows that they had been in previous conflict, and had overcome; and though they do not prostrate themselves in adoration and worship, as the elders in the fourth chapter, they do cry with a loud voice,

Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb {Rev. 7:10}.

This shows that they are redeemed to God.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, we have the throne of God, the Lamb, the elders, and living creatures, and all the angels standing round about the throne; but here we have in addition this great multitude, which no man could number {Rev. 7:9}.

They have

white robes {Rev. 7:9},

as we saw that those also had who suffered unto death for the truth's sake under the fifth seal, which shows that God: accounts them righteous and spotless in His sight. But observe that this “great multitude” have no crowns, are not seated on thrones, neither have they harps, as the elders in the fourth and fifth chapters. Moreover, they are described as serving God

day and night in His temple {Rev. 7:15}

whereas when the Church is seen in Rev. 21: it is said,

I saw no temple therein {Rev. 21:22}.

We notice also that all this “great multitude” came out of the great tribulation; this specially characterizes them. Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, to baptize believers into “one body,” an immense number of whom have fallen asleep in Jesus; and the “great tribulation” has not yet commenced, so that this also distinguishes them as a people, though saved, not identified with the Church. This “great multitude” have also been exposed to peculiar bodily sufferings and hardships, as those will be who live during the unparalleled persecution and oppression of “the man of sin.” It is ‘therefore said of them that they

shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, etc. {Rev. 7:16};

and that

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes {Rev. 7:17}.

Some may say, Does not this chapter present the Church to us, only in another aspect to what we saw in the fourth and fifth chapters? We reply, that if those who had previously included the Church were omitted here, there might be some reason for the supposition; but the “great multitude” comes in here as an additional company. Besides, one of the elders, who, as we have before noticed, are always characterized in this book by their spiritual intelligence, raises the question, and then gives us the answer,

what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? {Rev. 7:13}.

Do not these questions at once distinguish them? The elder does not say, who are we? but, What are these? and whence came they? Can anything be plainer? The answer is,

These are they which came out of (the) great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, &c.{Rev. 7:14}.

The great tribulation is called by Jeremiah,

Jacob's trouble,

for they crucified the true Messiah, and will receive the false one.

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).

The prophet says,

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7).

Mark, it is not called the time of the Church's trouble, but of Jacob's trouble. The Church is promised to be kept from it (Rev. 3:10). Daniel says,

There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. . . . The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand (Dan. 12:1, 10).

Our Lord also said,

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet [see Dan. 9:27] stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: . . . for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake [Israel is called the elect in Isa. 45:9, 22,] those days shall be shortened (Matt. 24:15, 22).

That is, so terrible will be the hand of oppression, in causing all to be put to death who will not worship the beast, that unless God were to shorten the days, all the faithful on the earth would be exterminated. Out of this "great tribulation" this "great multitude" came.

How beautifully parenthetical, then, this seventh chapter of the Revelation comes in, to relieve the heart in the contemplation of such terrible scenes as this book presents to us, both before and after it. How it tells us of divine mercy rejoicing against judgment, and shows us that those faithful ones, who refuse to bow down to the beast or his image, and will not receive his mark in their foreheads and right hands, will overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and find a place of never-ending blessing in God's own presence.

Chapter 8:6 to Chapter 11: the Seven Trumpets

At whatever period the seven trumpets begin to sound, the series is continued until the Lord takes His great power, and reigns. The first four trumpet-actions do not seem to bear directly on men, though the third trumpet-sound causes the waters to become bitter, and many men drink of the waters, and die. The last three trumpets are connected with terrible power and judgment directly upon men living on the earth, and are called the three woes. It is God punishing the inhabitants of the earth. The trumpets are severer in their character than the seals.

We noticed, in considering the seventh chapter, that the angels were not to sound their trumpets until the elect remnant of Israel was set apart — till the servants of our God are sealed in their foreheads. That being done, the first angel sounds a trumpet.

The First Trumpet

The FIRST ANGEL sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (Rev. 8:7).

We must never forget, in reading the Revelation, that after the Church has been caught up, the energy of Satan in the earth will be increasingly put forth, so as at last to deluge the world with infidelity; and God will send men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. Like as in the days of Pharaoh, men will say,

Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him? {see Ex. 5:2}

and the only Lord God, and only wise God, will be denied, and man exalted. Therefore, under such circumstances, we may expect that God would remarkably manifest Himself as the living God, by various actions in different parts of the universe, as He has hitherto done in the days of special darkness and unbelief. The hail, fire, turning water into blood, and other plagues of Egypt, bear testimony to this; and closing the heavens, that there might be no rain for three years and a half, and then again sending rain in Ahab's day, show us the same thing. Nor should we forget the darkness at the crucifixion of our Lord, and the signs that followed, in the rending of the rocks, the earthquake, the rending of the veil, the opening of the graves, and rising of the bodies of the saints, and appearing to many, as God's own witnesses to men that He is the living God.

The third part of trees and green grass may be emblematic of prosperity. Thus, men are touched in their prosperous circumstances.

The Second Trumpet

The SECOND ANGEL sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed (Rev. 8:8, 9).

In the first trumpet, we see hail, fire, and blood, cast upon the earth, and some trees and all green grass burnt up. In the second trumpet, a great mountain, as it were (that is, something similar to a great burning mountain), is cast into the sea, when the third part of the sea becomes blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea die, and a third of the ships are destroyed. In the first trumpet, the earth, trees, grass are affected; and in the second, the sea, its creatures, and its ships: both are fiery, burning judgments.

The great burning mountain may be a symbol of power removed from its accustomed place, and thrown into that which brings terrible judgment upon the people.

The Third Trumpet

The THIRD ANGEL sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter (Rev. 8:10, 11).

This judgment is upon rivers, and fountains of water, turning them bitter, and producing death on many men who drink thereof. One would think that such mighty exhibitions of Divine power would soften men's hearts. But it is not so. Man's mind will, perhaps, then try to account for such changes, even as it does now for many of God's actings. Love, God's own love to man as a sinner, in the Cross of Christ, alone breaks and captivates the human heart. Mercy, sweet mercy, is the sound that the Holy Spirit uses to enter and take full possession of man's affections and desires. Some one has said truly, that

"Law and terrors do but harden

All the while they work alone

But a sense of blood-bought pardon

Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

The star falling from heaven may be the symbol of a mighty ruler having fallen from his place of authority; burning as a lamp may show how brightly he had shone. "Waters" may be emblematic of people, and "fountains" and "rivers" their sources of refreshment.

The Fourth Trumpet

The FOURTH ANGEL sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise (Rev. 8:12).

Thus we see the soundings of the first four angels connected with signs and changes in almost every department of the universe. There are not only

signs in the earth beneath,

but also

wonders in heaven above {Acts 2:19}:

The earth, trees, grass, sea, fish, rivers, fountains, men, sun, moon, stars, day and night, each in turn exhibit marks of God's interference. All these judgments have doubtless symbolic signification. Under the action of the fourth trumpet, the highest authorities are smitten — sun, moon, and stars. But all these things, together with the casting of hail and fire on the earth mingled with blood, are far less severe than the judgments that follow the sounding of the other three angels. These are specially marked by being prefaced with an announcement of an angel, saying, WOE, WOE, WOE to the inhabitants of the earth.

And I beheld, and heard (not an angel but) an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! (Rev. 8:13).

This distinctly marks the last three trumpets as directly upon the inhabitants of the earth. God now deals directly with men, and that at first by the power of Satan, and then by the personal coming of Christ Himself.

The Fifth Trumpet

When the FIFTH ANGEL sounds, a mighty potentate is seen, likened to a star, once having had a place among the heavenly luminaries, but fallen from it:

a star (not 'fall' but) fallen from heaven {Rev. 9:1},

to whom the key of the bottomless pit is given; i.e. the abyss where Satan will be imprisoned, not the lake of fire. He opened the abyss; a dense smoke and darkness arose from the pit, and out of the smoke came locusts upon earth, with the power of scorpions. This mission is one of judicial bearing on men, and, perhaps, especially, on the Jews; for they are commanded not to hurt the grass, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. They are not to kill, but to torment them five months. Infliction, and misery without death, characterize this judgment. That these locusts are figurative of Satanic power seems reasonable, from their issuing out of the bottomless pit, their being likened to horses prepared to battle, wearing crowns on their heads, having faces of men, hair of women, and teeth of lions, breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings like the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. They have tails also like scorpions, and have a king over them — the angel of the bottomless pit. All these things mark them as mighty instruments for inflicting torture on men, and sufficiently prove that they are not mere locusts, but devils let loose to grievously torment man. We are told,

In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them {Rev. 9:6}.

What language can more touchingly convey the exquisite suffering of men in those days. It may be much nearer, too, than any of us think! Happy they who are now safely sheltered by the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

This may be truly called a woe; but terrible woes are yet to come. Accordingly, we are told,

One woe is past, and behold there come two woes more after these things {Rev. 9:12}.

The Sixth Trumpet

The SIXTH ANGEL sounded, and I heard a voice from the

four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates {Rev. 9:13, 14}.

This is done, and they are prepared for a limited time, not to torment, but to slay the third part of men. Two hundred millions of wicked agents are employed in slaying men —

two hundred thousand thousand {Rev. 9:16}.

It seems Satanic agency, because of the fire, smoke, and brimstone which issued from their mouths; and the region may be in the east.

By these three, that is, by the

fire, smoke, and brimstone,

was the third part of men killed {see Rev. 9:18}.

But, as we have seen before, all these judgments do not lead men to repentance. One might have thought that these solemn interventions of God might have caused those who were spared to turn to God. But we are told,

And the rest of the men which were not killed by those plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts (Rev. 9:20, 21).

How sunken and incurable is the heart of man! How every part of his history — past, present, and future, illustrates the Divine verdict, that

the carnal mind is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be {Rom. 8:7}.

Seeing that such terrible things are coming upon the earth, and we know not how soon, how prayerful and earnest should we be in seeking to win souls for Christ. May our gracious God most mercifully work, by the power of His Holy Spirit, through the gospel of His grace, to the salvation of multitudes of sinners now so zealously posting their way toward

the wrath to come {1 Thess. 1:10}.

The Seventh Trumpet

sounds, and our souls are at once drawn from earth and its miseries to heaven and its joys. Heaven rejoices that the earth is

rescued from the hands of man and Satan, and that the Lord Jesus, the rightful heir, takes possession of it (Rev. 11:15-19).

The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever {Rev. 11:15}.

As usual, the elders who delight in the exaltation of the Lord, are in intelligent communion with God about the things of Christ; therefore we find that

the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast; because thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned {Rev. 11:16, 17}.

Observe that the living creatures are not noticed here in company with the elders.

The consequences and attendants upon Christ's taking the judgment and government of the earth into His own hands follow the sounding of this trumpet.

Thy wrath is come {Rev. 11:18};

for He will come, in flaming fire taking vengeance, and must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

The nations were angry {Rev. 11:18},

or, have been full of wrath; but now it is the time of the wrath of the Lamb.

Every eye shall see Him . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him {Rev. 1:7}.

We also see that God's servants the prophets, and the saints, are rewarded, and those that fear Him, both small and great; those that destroyed or corrupted the earth are destroyed; and the dead are judged. It is a brief sketch of the various acts of judgment during the reign of Christ, from the beginning of His taking the kingdom to the end.

The chapter closes with the account of the temple of God being opened in heaven, the ark of the testament seen, with the lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. Happy for our hearts to find, that while judgment is poured out upon earth, the ark of the covenant is seen in heaven, witnessing to God's faithfulness, and the everlasting stability of His people's hope. The ark tells us of the mercy seat and the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. This is rest. The precious blood, presented for us before God, always reminds us of entrance into the holiest and perfect peace, whatever may be the trouble and distress around. While looking

thus by faith at our Lord Jesus at the right hand of God, presenting His own perfect sacrifice there on our behalf, we can not only cry, Come, Lord Jesus! but we realize that

"Faith almost changes into sight,

While, from afar, she spies

Her fair inheritance in light

Above created skies.

"Some rays of heaven break sweetly in

At all the opening flaws;

Visions of endless bliss are seen,

And native air she draws."

Chapter 10, 11:1-14: the Parenthesis Between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets

As we found a parenthetical announcement between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, so there is also a parenthesis between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. Sore and terrible judgments had been poured upon men, as we have seen, and before the climax, when Christ shall take unto Him His great power and reign, the visions and attendant acts, delineated in the tenth and part of the eleventh chapters, are brought before God's servant.

The tenth chapter evidently intimates that Christ is soon about to assert His own rights in the earth, and to declare that He is the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. The mighty angel clothed with a cloud, with a rainbow about his head, his countenance like the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, seems symbolical of our Lord; for He is presented to us in a somewhat similar appearance in the first chapter. It was a vision John had of a mighty angel thus symbolizing Christ, because the period for the actual return of Christ had not yet come. It is, doubtless, to inform us, that however hardened, unbelieving, and impenitent men may be, yet that Christ is Lord of all, and is shortly about to lay claim to all, and, therefore, that matters will be rapidly hastened.

We must refer to the book of Daniel to get anything like a clear elucidation of this tenth chapter. In the vision recorded by the prophet in the twelfth of Daniel, he says,

And one said to THE MAN clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard THE MAN clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when He shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things SHALL BE FINISHED (Dan. 12:6, 7).

The man clothed in linen refers us back to the vision in the tenth chapter, fifth and sixth verses, by the side of the river Hiddekel, which corresponds with the vision John had of

one like unto the Son of man,

in the first chapter of Revelation. So that no doubt can be left on the mind that

the man clothed in linen,

which Daniel saw, is Christ. In the tenth chapter of Revelation, John says,

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders

uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer [or rather, that there should be no longer delay]: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God SHOULD BE FINISHED, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets {Rev. 10:1-7}.

Thus we see that the similarity between Daniel's vision and John's is most striking; and by comparing them, as God by His Spirit may enable us, we shall be greatly helped in the understanding of both.

Daniel, however, is commanded to

shut up the words, and seal the book to the time of the end (Dan. 12:4);

whereas, John sees the

little book open {Rev. 10:2},

because, I suppose, the time of the end, that is, the end of the age, or seventieth week, or the last half of it, has now come. The question in Daniel is,

How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? {Rev. 12:6}

The answer is, that it shall be

for a time, times, and a half {Rev. 12:7},

or three years and a half. In Revelation, instead of its being translated that there should be time no longer, it should be that there should be no longer delay. The thought that the time state is over, and eternity come, would be most incorrect; for the millennial age has not only yet to come, but John is told that he must prophesy again to peoples and nations. It is then an intimation between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, that there shall be no longer delay, and that restraint shall be withheld to the full consummation of the abominations of the wicked one; that the mystery of iniquity shall be quickly and fully developed. Daniel speaks of all being finished at the end of a time, times, and a half; and John also says, that when the seventh angel shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished. Both in Daniel and in Revelation the person lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by Him that liveth for ever; only in Revelation it is added,

who created heaven, and the things which therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein {Rev. 10:6};

because, as we have repeatedly noticed in the apocalyptic period, God is denied by man, not only as Redeemer, but also as Creator.

The mystery of God {Rev. 10:7}

referred to here cannot be "the mystery" of the Church, the body of Christ, spoken of by Paul: 1st. Because the mystery of the Church was not revealed in other ages unto prophets, but was kept secret since the world began (Eph. 3:5; Rom. 16:25); whereas, concerning

the mystery of God,

it is here said that it should be finished, as He hath declared to the prophets. 2nd. We know that the Church is in heaven, before the book is taken, the seals opened, or trumpets sounded.

Besides “the mystery” of the one body, the Church, there are other things in Scripture associated with the word “mystery.” We have

the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16);

the

mystery (1 Cor. 15:51)

of the resurrection and change of the saints; the

mystery (Rom. 11:24, 25),

of Israel;

the mystery (Eph. 1:9, 10),

of all things in heaven and in earth being gathered together in one, in Christ; the

mystery (Rev. 17:5),

of the mother of harlots;

the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7), etc.

Here it is

the mystery of God,

the mystery, as I judge, that God should allow man to go on in such a course of unparalleled evil, and under such Satanic energy. Some have thought that “the mystery of God” is God grafting Israel again into their own olive tree, which prophets have so repeatedly foretold — the time when

Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit (Isa. 27:6);

but this is not called in scripture “the mystery of God.” However, it is clear that the sounding of the seventh angel will be the time when not only judgment will fall upon the ungodly, but when Christ will deliver, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and bring His ancient people into their long looked-for blessing and promised inheritance.

Some have thought, that because “the mystery of God,” being “finished,” is accompanied with the last or seventh of the apocalyptic trumpets, it must necessarily be the time of the changing and the taking up of the saints, and identical with 1 Cor. 15, where we get the

mystery {1 Cor. 15:51}

of the living saints changed, the dead raised, and

the last trump (1 Cor. 15:52).

Appearances are certainly much in favour of such a thought; but for reasons before assigned, it cannot be the Church which is referred to in Rev. 10:7. Nor are

the last trump,

and the

voice of the seventh angel (of Rev. 10:7),

identical; for the former is connected with the saints being raised and changed, the latter with the Lord's return from heaven with His saints. Neither are we to understand, that by "the last trump" is meant the last that will ever be sounded, any more than "the last day," or the day when we shall be raised up (John 6), is the last period of time. In both cases we are clearly to understand, that they are the last to us in relation to this present time. That "the day of the Lord," so often spoken of in Scripture, will have its course for a thousand years after we have been raised up "at the last day," that is, after we have our "last day," is certain, and also there can be no doubt but that after the raising of the saints "at the last trump," another

great trumpet will be blown (Isa. 27:13; Matt. 24:31)

to gather Israel — those who are now scattered to the four winds. It is evident, also, that this trumpet of Isaiah and Matthew is after the seven apocalyptic trumpets have sounded, because the last of their actions ushers in the personal return of Christ. Some one has said, that "the last trump" of 1 Cor. 15 is properly termed the last, because it announces the close or termination of the course of the Church's pilgrimage on earth. In 1 Thess. 4 it is called

the trump of God {1 Thess. 4:16},

but it is blown with an entirely different action and history from that of Isa. 27, or the apocalyptic. We might put the trumpet of Isa. 27 in company with that of Matt. 24:31, and it is blown in a scene of action which succeeds that of Rev. 8, 9, 11:15, where we have the trumpets of the Apocalypse. Among the several actions of the trumpets in Num. 10, we find that the last in order was for the gathering of the congregation together.

The chapter concludes with the account of John's being commanded to

go and take the little book which is open in the angel's hand {Rev. 10:8},

which he did, and was then ordered to

eat it up {Rev. 10:9}.

This also he did and according to the saying of the angel, he found that it was in his mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as he had eaten it, his belly was bitter. Then it is said to him,

Thou must prophesy again before many peoples and nations, and tongues, and kings {Rev. 10:11}.

As I have before remarked, this last command shows that the end of the age is not yet come. But as the apostle had here a very similar experience to the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:3), we may gather this important practical instruction, that if we would be God's faithful witnesses on the earth,

we must know what it is to eat God's word — the open book. Jeremiah said,

Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart {Jer. 15:16}.

We must know, too, the inward experience of the truth. It is very sweet to gather up portions of God's word. The Scripture often becomes an object of intense present interest, as well as of comfort, but it has its bitter workings. It makes painful discoveries of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, reveals the secret springs of motive and desire, and uncovers the mask of worldliness;

for the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart {Heb. 4:12}.

In the parenthesis between the openings of the sixth and seventh seals, we had the tribes of the children of Israel brought before us, as well as nations, kindreds, and tongues; so in the parenthetic announcement between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, John is not only commanded to prophesy again before many nations and tongues, but Israel, too, is again introduced. Daniel's people, with the holy city and temple of God, are presented at the opening of the 11th chapter. Gentiles are treading under foot the holy city. When this scene is fulfilled, Jews and Gentiles will be recognized as such. Not so now; for in the Church of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all believers are one in Christ; but when the body is complete, and we have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, then, as we have before seen, the seventieth week of prophecy relating to Daniel's people and city will have its accomplishment; therefore Jews and Gentiles will be again recognized as such. It will be the transition time between the coming of the Lord for His saints, and His coming with His saints. Our chapter, therefore, begins with the following announcement:

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months (Rev. 11:1, 2).

We must distinguish, however, between

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES {Luke 21:24},

and

THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES {Rom. 11:25};

for they are very distinct in Scripture. It is clearly the former which is referred to here. Our Lord said that

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

We may say that the times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar, from which time, more or less, Israel and the holy city have been trodden down by them, and Gentilism has had the

ascendancy. It ran through its four successive monarchies, and since then has been hastening on to its completion in the ten kingdoms, and final destruction (Dan. 2:31-45). The times of the Gentiles are thus running on, and Jerusalem is trodden down. After the Church is removed, the Gentiles will still tread it down, as we here see; and even when the Lord comes in glory with His saints, He will find Jerusalem compassed with armies and then the end of “the times of the Gentiles” will have come. The Lord Himself shall fight against those nations (Zech. 14:1, 2). He is the stone cut out without hands that shall fall upon the Gentile image, break it in pieces, and scatter it as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors.

THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES

is a very different thing. Israel, as a people, are now set aside, though a remnant is saved by the gospel, according to the election of grace. God is filling up the intended number of Gentiles to be saved (the word fullness might be rendered “complement”), and thus calling out of the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14). When God shall have fully gathered out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, the allotted number unto Himself, then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be come in — come in to God; and Israel, now as a nation altogether under judicial blindness, except those to whom Christ is revealed, will then be the object of God’s peculiar care and blessing. Paul calls this a mystery, and he would not have saints he ignorant of it. He says

that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so [that is, in this order] all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins (Rom. 11:25-27).

The Deliverer, Christ, must come to effect this. Thus we see that “the times of the Gentiles” and “the fullness of the Gentiles” are two very different things.

Our chapter, as we have seen, introduces us to the

holy city, the temple of God, the altar,

and

them that worship {Rev. 11:1, 2}

— all Jewish elements; and a people recognized as worshiping, not on Christian but on Jewish ground, and oppressed by the Gentiles outside. At this very time, too, God has His own special testimony. There are two witnesses. Their testimony is not of the heavenly calling, like ours, but they stand before the God of the earth, and assert His rights. They are like two olive-trees for fruitfulness, and two candlesticks as bearers of light in the midst of gross darkness. They do not bear the testimony of the gospel of the grace of God, but a miraculous and righteous testimony, like that of Moses in the days of hardened Pharaoh, and Elijah in the time of infidel Ahab. They testify to the reality of the living God, and are clothed in sackcloth, under a deep sense of the dishonor done to His holy and blessed name; they have power to shut heaven that it rain not, and to turn water into blood, and to smite the earth with plagues as often as they will. Moreover, they are not in the spirit of the grace of Christ, who prayed for His murderers, and returned blessing for cursing; but these witnesses are commissioned to execute vengeance on their enemies. This marks this testimony as coming on after the present gospel testimony shall have closed, and

shows that the whole scene is characterized by Jewish and earthly righteous principles, and not by the gospel of the grace of God. It is an important point to notice, because it proves that the gathering out of the members of the body of Christ by the gospel of the grace of God must have been finished before this opposite character of testimony is introduced. We cannot conceive that God would command, and give power by His Spirit to His servants, to

love their enemies {see Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27}

and

devour their enemies {see Rev. 11:5}

at the same time.

If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed {Rev. 11:5}.

Their testimony will continue for twelve hundred and sixty days, which is equal to about forty and two months, or three years and a half. At the close of this the beast, or Man of Sin, is brought before us for the first time in the Revelation.

When they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and overcome them, and kill them {Rev. 11:7}.

To kill the body is all that man or Satan can do. Their dead bodies lie in the street of the city where our Lord was crucified — - Jerusalem now comparable only to wicked Sodom and infidel Egypt; and both Jews and Gentiles look at their dead bodies for three days and a half, and will not permit them to be buried; and, as we might expect, because of their death, these dwellers upon earth rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another,

because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth {Rev. 11:10}.

Elijah was said to be a troubler of Israel, and God's true servants are a trouble to the world still, and ever must be, until Jesus is King over all the earth and every knee bows to Him. But God is the God of resurrection; and this is an idea far beyond the human intellect to conceive; and, as the resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the dead struck the ungodly with utter confusion, so here again God's own power in raising the dead and shaking the earth, will turn the merriment and rejoicing of the ungodly into fear and distress. Resurrection has been and will be God's way of vindicating His own servants and of publicly demonstrating the reality of His own truth. These faithful martyrs may lie in the street and appear only as worthless corpses and vanquished tormentors; but

after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand {Rev. 11:11-13}.

The effect of this was, that the survivors

were affrighted, and gave glory,

not to the God of the earth before whom these witnesses stood, and whose rights they contended for, but

to the God of heaven {Rev. 11:13}.

They were troubled and terrified, like many others have been, at what they saw and heard; but we do not read that they bowed to Jesus as the Lord of heaven and earth, and took refuge in Him as their Savior. Oh, no! the scene forcibly reminds us of our Lord's own testimony to the dire depravity of the human heart, which shows that, if man rejects God's own word, no visions or calamities will savingly arrest him.

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead {Luke 16:31}.

This scene closes the parenthetical announcement between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. It is followed by the solemn statement,

The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly {Rev. 11:14}.

Chapter 12 – 14: the Jewish Remnant and the Great Tribulation

The twelfth chapter may be read in company with the thirteenth and fourteenth, as forming another distinct section of the apocalyptic book. Though the range extends from the birth of the Messiah to His return to tread the winepress of the wrath of God, yet it is principally occupied with the great events of the last half of Daniel's seventieth week. In the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, we have for the most part a record of events in relation to the earth — Satan, the beast, and the false prophet being the principal actors in the scene; but in the fourteenth chapter we have an emerging into light, and God brought in upon the scene, and therefore it is not how things stand in relation to Satan and the beast, but how they stand in relation to God.

The instruction of the twelfth chapter is very extensive in its range, though the subject is especially Israel. It takes us back farther than any part of the Apocalypse, even to the birth of Jesus, and carries us on to the remnant in affliction, just before the Lord Himself appears as their deliverer. The woman spoken of in the first verse is described as

clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars (Rev. 12:1).

She is invested with supreme authority, and all light and rule are derived from, and are subordinate to her, as the moon's is to the sun. (Cp. Dan. 7:27.) We find in Genesis that one of Joseph's dreams was, that

the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to him {Gen. 37:9};

and when he told it to his father, Jacob understood that the dream referred to himself and the mother and brethren of Joseph; therefore he rebuked him, and said unto him,

What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee on the earth? (Gen. 37:9, 10).

The number twelve is the administrative rule of God in the hands of man. From all this we gather, that the woman, in the opening of our chapter, refers to the house of Israel, from which, according to the flesh, our Lord came.

Unto us a Child is born {Isa. 9:6};

for He was

the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1),

and was

made of the seed of David, according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3);

thus connected with all the promises to Abraham, and all the royalties through David. Therefore we read in the next verse,

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered {Rev. 12:2}.

There was, however, another wonder in heaven, which we are told, in the ninth verse, was that old serpent which is called the Devil, and Satan. This terrible being is presented to us as a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads (emblematic of his holding the sway of the Roman empire, and that the vision is of a time previous to the ten kings being crowned (Rev. 13:1), and drawing a third part of the stars of heaven with his tail, and casting them on the earth. This great devourer is followed in the train by those, perhaps potentates of the world, whose proper duty it was to rule in the fear of God, but who, by his drawing, come under his power.

The attitude which this awful dragon takes is that of watching for Messiah's birth, and to swallow Him up, if possible.

The dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born (Rev. 12:4).

Now, who can have attentively read the second chapter of Matthew without seeing how literally this was accomplished! Directly the birth of Jesus was announced,

Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled {see Matt. 2:3},

and the king, as if imbued fully with the subtlety of the great deceiver; though he professed a desire to

worship (Matt. 2:8)

Jesus, only had an earnest longing

to destroy Him (Matt. 2:13),

and afterwards in great wrath issued a command to put to death all the young children from two years old and under, hoping in this way to include the Son of God — the man child, who should yet have the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. As we might expect, the entrance of Jesus into this world would be connected with a mighty opposing energy of Satan; so in no period of the Divine record do we find such hosts of Satanic powers working on the earth, and especially in the land of Israel, as during the days of our Lord in His flesh. We know, too, that though Herod's murderous scheme only turned out to his utter confusion — to the complete failure of the roaring lion — yet afterwards, as the wily serpent, he tempts the blessed Lord with,

If Thou be the Son of God, etc. {Matt. 4:3-6}.

But, as at all other times, the great red dragon was so utterly confounded, that the devil left Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him {see Matt. 4:11}.

From these records in the gospel it is clear that Satan was especially set upon devouring this man child.

We are further told,

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne {Rev. 12:5}.

This shows us that, however the hatred of Satan and man might rage, yet the God of resurrection could raise up Jesus from the dead, and seat Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. And what child was ever born of a woman that will sway the universal sceptre, but Jesus? Who else shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, or break them to shivers as a potter's vessel, but Jesus? His death on the cross, instead of checking the onward course of this man child, only manifested God's love and man's wickedness, and was so infinitely meritorious to God, that we are told

He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, etc. {Phil. 2:8-11}.

So we read,

Her child was caught up unto God and to His throne.

It is ascension, prior to His taking future government (for there is nothing said about the life or even death of this man child), that is here brought out; and while the Church must always be included when the resurrection and ascension of Christ are brought out, nevertheless, the subject of this chapter is not the Church, but the history of those (of Israel especially) who suffer under Satan and his great minister, the Man of Sin, during the apocalyptic week. Though at present the people of Israel are virtually cut off, yet they are beloved for the fathers' sakes; and though the ten tribes are scattered to the four winds, God is able to gather them again to their own land; and, even before that, His eye will be upon a remnant, and He will bring them through the fire of unparalleled tribulation and anguish into their long promised blessing, when there shall be the days of heaven on the earth (Deut. 11:21).

The woman whom we have just before noticed as invested with dignity and glory, and giving birth to a man child who was to rule all nations, is now seen fleeing into the wilderness (Rev. 12:6). Here there is a great break of more than 1800 years in the chapter. It is a remnant of Jewish people under the oppression of Satan and the Man of Sin in the last half of Daniel's week. Their experience is often recorded in the psalms. (See Psa. 79 and 80.) Israel was the nation whom the Spirit of Christ called

His own {Psa. 78:52},

and one of its prophets had said,

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder (Isa. 9:6);

another prophet had declared that Bethlehem Ephratah should be the place from which He should come forth

that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2);

and other prophets predicted the unparalleled tribulation that the seed of Jacob will yet have to pass through — the period referred to, I believe, in this and the following chapter. Jeremiah says,

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it (Jer. 30:7).

Daniel also says,

There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people [always, in Daniel, referring to Israel] shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (Dan. 12:1).

Before, however, "the woman" flees into the wilderness, the heaven must be cleared of Satan and his angels. Though in our chapter this is not the order of narration, yet we know that it is by his power that that master-piece of iniquity, "the Man of Sin," and his attendant evils, are brought about. Satan is still the deceiver of the world, and also the accuser of the brethren; but he will yet fall, like lightning from heaven, and be cast down to earth. After his horrible purposes have been accomplished, he shall be bound with a chain, and cast into the bottomless pit for a season, and after a thousand years let loose for a time, before he is banished to the eternal misery of the lake of fire. Satan seems to be aware of his doom; for the devils said to Jesus,

Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? {Matt. 8:29}.

The point in Satan's work which is referred to here is his being cast down from the heavenlies as the accuser of our brethren {Rev. 12:10}.

What are we to understand by this? Is it not true that

the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience {Eph. 2:2},

has access into God's presence to accuse us there? There can be no doubt of this. We see it in Job.

When the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord (Job 1:6-12).

We find, also, when Joshua, the high-priest, is seen standing before the angel of the Lord, that Satan is also standing at his right hand (Zech. 3:1). In Ephesians we see Satan having access to the heavens, and our fight is described as against principalities and powers, against wicked spirits in heavenly places (see margin Eph. 6:12); that is, like as Joshua and the men of Israel fought against those who hindered their full possession and enjoyment of the land that God had given

them and brought them into, so our character of conflict is not down here with flesh and blood, but with Satan and his host in the heavenlies, who seek to hinder our enjoyment of that communion with the Father in the holiest of all, which we are brought into, through the riches of Divine grace in Christ, and through His blood. As Satan cannot swallow us up, because our life is hid with Christ in God, he does all that he can to hinder our fellowship with the Father, and to cast us down from the enjoyment of our high calling and standing in Christ:

They only consult to cast him down from his excellency (Psa. 62:4).

If we are abiding in Christ, we are impregnable to the devices of Satan. As to his being the accuser of the brethren, our consolation is, that Christ is in heaven as our Advocate, to meet every accusation; so that we need not fear. By the power of angelic agency, Satan and his hosts must yet be cast down; and let us remember, that angels, principalities, and powers are made subject unto Christ. We read that

Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels {see Rev. 12:7};

but Satan, who is always opposed to the Lord Jesus, will resist, though it will be in vain:

The dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven {Rev. 12:7, 8}.

The result will be, that Satan's power then will be wholly concentrated on earth; and as I presume that this will occur in

the midst of the week (see Dan. 9:27),

the Man of Sin will be then developed as fully energized by Satanic power, the whole world will be under such a delusion as to wonder after "the beast"; and "the woman," representing those of the Jews who stand out for the true God, will pass through the severest persecution. Hence we read,

The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

. . . Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time {Rev. 12:9-12}.

These verses, from the seventh to the twelfth inclusive, are clearly parenthetical, and therefore the sixth verse is taken up again in the fourteenth. The parenthesis seems purposely introduced, to account for the persecution of the woman, and the full development of the abomination which maketh desolate, the third and most dreadful woe to the inhabitants of the earth. We must not overlook, however, in this parenthesis, a loud voice (mark, not voices) which John heard in heaven at this time. It was a voice, saying,

Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ {Rev. 12:10};

for clearing the heavens of Satan and his angels seems the first act of Christ in power, in relation to the kingdom. We notice that this voice is heard in heaven, and is accompanied with triumph at the casting down of Satan. Who it is that utters this voice we are not told; but the heavenly saints

being at this time in heaven, like Abraham in the mount, who beheld the dreadful judgment and smoke of the doomed cities, but was not in them, so the saints in heaven will look down on the dreadful things coming upon the earth, and worship in the knowledge of the glory and power of Christ. By the expression,

our brethren {Rev. 12:10},

I understand the voice to refer to us who will then be around the throne of God in heaven, when it will be said,

The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death {Rev. 12:10, 11}.

Three things characterize these overcomers of Satan; first, they make the blood of the Lamb their confidence and shelter; secondly, they used the sword of the Spirit, the written word of God — the word of their testimony; thirdly, they esteemed the love of Christ beyond the love of life; they could say,

Thy lovingkindness is better than life {Psa. 63:3}:

They loved not their lives unto the death {Rev. 12:11}. Surely these are the three elements of vital Christianity. There is another very important thought added. It is this:

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth {Rev. 12:12}

Here we have two distinct classes—those dwelling in heaven called on to rejoice, and those dwelling on earth under an awful woe. Now, I ask, are not those dwelling in heaven, who are called on to rejoice at the casting down of the accuser of the brethren, the heavenly saints? Again, besides the inhabitants of the earth generally, “the woman” who flies into the wilderness is especially the object of Satan’s wrath and hatred. Surely it could not be strictly said, that he is in wrath with those who obey him, and are deceived by him at this time; it is, then, particularly against “the woman” who brought forth the man child that his wrath is directed. Therefore we find her distinguished in this chapter, as well as the dwellers in heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. The saints in heaven had overcome by the blood of the Lamb; the woman who keeps the commandments of God is persecuted by Satan and his allies on earth. With regard to the woman’s flight, we are told in Matt. 24, that when the Man of Sin is developed, that is, when the abomination of desolation is set up, of which Daniel prophesied concerning his city and people,

Then,

said our Lord,

let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: . . . But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day {Matt. 24:16-20}.

However much the flight of many at the siege of Jerusalem was like this, the following verse, and also the fifteenth, show that it can only have its full accomplishment in the days of the Man of Sin,

in Israel's last or seventieth week spoken of by Daniel.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved (Matt. 24:21, 22).

Accordingly, as the result of the dragon's hatred and persecution,

the woman {Rev. 12:6}

of our chapter is seen fleeing into the wilderness: but she is still the object of God's care; for she is not only helped in her flight with

two wings of a great eagle {Rev. 12:14},

but a place there is prepared of God for her, and she is nourished from the face of the serpent for a thousand two hundred and threescore days, or a time, times, and half a time. (Compare verses 6 and 14.) Satan, however, still pursues her, and casts water out of his mouth as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. But as the prophet said,

When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (Isa. 59:19);

so God, in His providential care over the persecuted remnant, will cause a wonderful deliverance, and shield her from the overflowing scourge of her mighty foe. We are told that

the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth (Rev. 12:16).

But though Satan is disappointed and confounded in his pursuit of those who flee into the wilderness, his wrath is not lessened, and it would seem as if, giving up those of Judæa who had fled into the wilderness, he found

the remnant of her seed {Rev. 12:17}

elsewhere; it may be in the city of Jerusalem. These are characterized by being faithful to Moses' law, and having the oracles of God: they

keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17).

The malice of Satan against the godly is remarkably brought out in this chapter. Now his hatred and power are directed against the Church of God, because it is God's present witness in the earth, she testifies of God's perfect love, and the unsearchable riches of Christ, she glories in the Cross, waits for the Son from heaven, and knows the world to be deceitful and doomed. Now the manifold wisdom of God is known by the Church unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies; but after the Church has been caught up, and God has other witnesses, then Satan's wickedness and enmity will be directed against them. But they are objects of God's care, beloved for the fathers' sakes; and when they call upon God in the day of trouble, He will deliver them, and they shall glorify Him. They are on Jewish ground, keeping the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, that is, the Scriptures which testify of Christ, the prophetic word concerning the coming kingdom and glory of Messiah. Hence we are told that

the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10),

and this prophetic book, the Revelation, is called

the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:2).

Their pleading, however, in the 79th and 80th Psalms, is very remarkable. After praying for

wrath {Psa. 79:6}

and

the revenging of blood {Psa. 79:10}

upon the heathen, and complaining of God's beautiful vineyard which He had planted for Himself being cut down, etc., they say,

Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself. So will not we go back from Thee: quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved {Psa. 80:17-19}. (See also Psa. 58.)

The unparalleled manifestation of diabolical and human blasphemy is seen in the thirteenth chapter. Satan finds one to accept at his hand the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, which Jesus refused. He who was a liar and murderer from the beginning has been most successful in his deceivings by being an imitator of God. We often see this in Scripture. God has wise virgins; Satan has virgins also — false. Christ sows good seed — wheat; Satan sows seed too — tares. God has a vine —

the true vine {John 15:1};

Satan has a vine also —

the vine of the earth {Rev. 14:18, 19}.

Christ has a bride; Satan has a harlot. God has a city — the New Jerusalem; Satan has also a city — Babylon. But none of his imitations seem so vile as in this chapter, none so perfect in blasphemy against God. For instance, God had a man, His well- beloved Son, to bear witness for Him in the earth. Satan will have a man also — the Man of Sin. God did

miracles, and wonders, and signs {Acts 2:22},

by Jesus of Nazareth; Satan's Servant will come too,

with all power, and signs, and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:9) (compare Acts 2:22 with 2 Thess. 2:9);

God will have all worship Jesus, and bow the knee to Him, for He is worthy; Satan also will have all that dwell upon the earth to worship "the beast," whose names are not written in the book of life. The saints of God will have His name

in their foreheads {Rev. 14:1, 22:4};

so the worshipers of “the beast” will receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. But worse than all is the direct blasphemy against God. The gospel of the grace of God now gives testimony to the love and wisdom and power of the triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; so we see in this chapter, that Satan has a trio also — the beast, the false prophet, and the image that doth speak — all energized by one lying spirit, all united in blaspheming God and deceiving men. This infernal scheme, venting itself in direct antagonism to Christ, seems to fill up the measure of iniquity, and bring speedy vengeance from heaven by the glorious appearing of the Son of man in power and great glory, who will consume this wicked one with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming. Both the beast and the false prophet will then be cast alive at once into

the lake of fire burning with brimstone (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:20).

Happy for us to know, that

when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

Satan having been cast out of heaven into the earth, as recorded in the previous chapter, we are not surprised at finding this chapter commencing with the rising up of the beast. The apostle says,

I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the names of blasphemy (Rev. 13:1).

He rises up out of the sea; which teaches us that he had been previously hid from the eye of man. Coming out of the sea may, perhaps, mean that he issues from peoples more or less civilized. Daniel saw also the great Gentile powers emerge from the sea: They

came up from the sea {Dan. 7:3}.

There were four great beasts. The first like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, and

the fourth beast dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till the Ancient of days did sit, etc. (Dan. 7:3-8).

This was Daniel’s vision of the great Gentile powers. The beast which John saw seems to include the whole of these great beasts; for he says,

The beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion . . . and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things (Rev. 13:2, 5).

The times of the Gentiles will be then still running on in the fourth or Roman empire — the legs of the image with its ten toes; or, as we have just seen, the ten-horned beast with its ten crowns — all, it would seem, personified in the first beast of the Apocalypse, or the little horn of Daniel, with man’s eyes, and mouth speaking great things. He is one under direct Satanic inspiration and

power

— he ascends out of the bottomless pit; and we are further told, that Satan gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority {Rev. 13:2}.

Daniel's little horn intimates that he issues from the Roman earth; and from the statement, Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers (Dan. 11:37),

we may expect that he will be a Jew. He will have the iron teeth, and dreadful and terrible strength of the fourth monarchy; for it will be said,

Who is able to make war with him? {Rev. 13:4}.

We must remember, that although the development of the beast will not take place till the hindering power the Church indwelt by the Holy Ghost — is removed, and Satan is cast out into the earth, yet that

the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7)

was working in Paul's day, and is still going on. John saw it also, and said,

Even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time (1 John 2:18).

The antichristian principle is working all around us, and growing rapidly; and we need grace and spiritual power from God to discern the evil, and flee from it. Sight and sense are not enough; for there is power with Satan's work; and he imitates God as far as he can, so as to be more effectual in deceiving. The soul taught by the Holy Ghost, and in subjection to the written Word, thus walking by faith and not by sight, trusting to the living God, and not leaning to his own understanding, is alone able to stand with God, or walk with God. Seeing that self-will and self-exaltation will characterize the Man of Sin, let us watch against these two evils, which are in every one of our hearts by nature, and let us seek to be conformed to our blessed Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart, and who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

Perhaps it is difficult to say what we are to understand by

one of his heads, as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed {Rev. 13:3},

further than, that if it does not carry us back to the old Roman empire — defunct as it has been, but again to arise — then it must be some check given to the beast's success after he is manifested; but it is only for a time; for he is restored again, and comes forth under the flattery of a world-wide admiration:

All the world wondered after the beast (Rev. 13:3).

It is to be observed, that this period will be characterized by devil- worship; for "the dragon," that is, the devil and Satan (Rev. 12:9), who gave power unto the beast, will be "worshipped" (Rev. 13:4). The beast, too, will be worshipped; for

all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain (Rev.13:8).

Those who have been watching the moral changes and course of events for many years, must have noticed the rapid increase of irreverence for the things of God, the steady advance of infidelity, and the earnestness with which many have fallen in with spirit- rapping and consulting with familiar spirits; and, by men accustoming themselves to such things, we can understand how gradually the great deceiver is paving the way for the development of his wickedness, which is so soon to be connected with open infidelity and blasphemy. The well-instructed child of God cannot but observe the occurrence of remarkable events, especially of late, and see that the day of the Lord is approaching with great rapidity. Saints are expected to see this, and are therefore taught to assemble themselves together, and to exhort one another; and so much the more as they see the day approaching (Heb. 10:25). The day of the Lord is not set before us, strictly speaking, as our hope; but the Lord Himself. He is

the one hope of our calling (1 Thess. 1:10),

and we are to serve God, and wait for His Son from heaven. He says to us,

Surely, I come quickly {Rev. 22:20}!

and our response should be,

Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}!

But while thus in a waiting posture for Christ, many events may and do occur which show us that the day is approaching — the day when Christ will be manifested in glory with His saints — the day of the world's judgment, and of Israel's restoration and blessing. But the calling, standing, and hope of the Church, is heavenly.

Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20).

In fact, prophecy relates for the most part to the earth; but, as members of Christ's body, while taking heed to the sure word of prophecy, and learning much of God in tracing His dealings in the earth, we are instructed to look for the Lord Himself, who shall descend from heaven with a shout, when those who are alive and remain, and all the dead in Christ, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

To return to our chapter. We find that this time of pride and blasphemy is limited. It will continue forty and two months (Rev. 13:5).

Daniel also speaks of power given to this enemy for a time, times, and the dividing of time. Regarding "time" as being equivalent to a year, as the marginal reading of Dan. 11:13, "times, even years," would seem to warrant, both these periods would be exactly three years and a half; the period of the half of the last week of Daniel, during which the beast will continue in open manifestation, after having caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease (Dan. 9:27). The beast will not only speak great things, but will open his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle or dwelling, and them that dwell in heaven (Rev. 13:6). It is remarkable

that we get the dwellers in heaven noticed again here, as we observed in the previous chapter (Rev. 12:12); and the more so because we find “saints” under the oppression of the beast in the next verse. Now, if we understand the dwellers in heaven to be the heavenly saints, who, ere this period, have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, who are the “saints” brought before us here? It may be well to notice, that “saint” is not a title peculiar to the New Testament. Daniel repeatedly speaks of the saints, and as on the earth too during the time of the Antichrist. But Daniel does not speak of the Church; his prophecies are concerning his city and people. He says, He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High (Dan. 7:25).

He also says,

The horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them . . . and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom (Dan. 7:21, 22).

There is no mention here of resurrection or rapture, and therefore they cannot be the Church. He also intimates that some will be brought through this great tribulation; for he tells us,

At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that is written in the book (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 13:7, 8).

The prophet Daniel thus speaks of saints, evidently Jewish, who are brought through the fire into their own promised blessing in the earth. Jeremiah calls it the time of Jacob’s trouble. Our Lord also says, that

for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened {Matt. 24:22}.

If they were not shortened, the oppression of the beast would go on to exterminate all who do not worship him; so that

except those days should be shortened, there would no flesh be saved {Matt. 24:22}.

Israel is called repeatedly in Scripture God’s “elect.” On comparing Matt. 24:31 with Isa. 27:12, 13, it will be clearly seen that the “elect” there mentioned are not the Church, but the seed of Jacob. Isa. 45:4; 65:9, 22, also show that Israel is called God’s “elect.” Another prophet says, that in all the land two parts shall be cut off and die, and that God will bring a third part of them through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried:

They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God (Zech. 13:8, 9).

All these are clearly people suffering great tribulation on the earth, and brought through it into blessing; like Noah and his family, carried through the tribulation, and brought into the purged earth. With these prophecies our chapter agrees. We are told,

It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. . . . He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints (Rev. 13:7-10).

This shows us that many are killed, and some are brought through: — they overcome, not by carnal weapons, but by faith and patience. This is the Divine rule, that no flesh shall glory in God's presence. The saints, in the great tribulation, will have to learn that

by strength shall no man prevail {1 Sam 2:9}.

They will not overcome by their own sword or power; for he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword, etc. God will then be glorified, as He is now, by patient faith; hence it is added, Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

They will be fully delivered by the personal return of the Messiah in glory, and be brought into the millennial blessing. Those who are faithful unto death, and lose their earthly inheritance, will have a place in the first resurrection (as we learn from Rev. 20:4), and reign with Christ. The time of Nebuchadnezzar is remarkably typical of the period we have been contemplating. The king, in self-will and pride, set up a golden image, and commanded all on pain of death to bow down to it. Nearly all obeyed. A very few were the exceptions. They refused to worship the image, and were faithful to the living and true God; they suffered and overcame, not by sword, but by faith and patience. They were cast into the fiery furnace. God was with them in it, and delivered them out of it. They were brought into greater honor and blessing in the earth than they had ever known before. The infidel king was abased, and their oppressors consumed. So will it be in the days of the beast.

Happy, those whose citizenship is in heaven, who are partakers of the heavenly calling, and members of the body of Christ; for as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall

also bear the image of the heavenly. In a little while He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

The second beast, or false prophet, is now brought before us. So apostate is the earth, the place of civilization, that it gives forth this false Messiah. This man, and the first beast are both spoken of in the 19th chapter as persons, and receive special judgment from Christ at His coming (Dan. 7:11; Rev. 19:20). The first beast, as we saw, seems identified with the Roman empire, and is characterized by power and blasphemy. The second beast, though coming in his own name, a false Christ, comes up out of the earth, instead of from heaven, as the true Christ. He will have some outward semblance of the meek and lowly Jesus; but in his heart he is devilish, and

out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh {Matt. 12:34}.

He had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon (Rev. 13:11).

How unlike that blessed One who spake as never man spake, and concerning whom the people wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth {Luke 4:22}!

He was able to speak a word in season to him that was weary, to bind up the brokenhearted, to heal every sin-sick soul, to comfort the mourner, to invite all the weary and heavy-laden to His own bosom for rest, and He cast out none that came to Him. He pleased not Himself. His heart of matchless love was set upon doing good. No case was sunk too low for His arm of mercy to reach,

no one was too vile for His love to minister unto. In short, the Cross of Calvary was the only way in which His sinner-loving heart could fully manifest itself, and there He accomplished the work of eternal redemption for all those who take refuge in His precious blood. Surely He was full of grace and truth!

"On such love my soul shall ponder,

Love so vast, so full, so free;

Say, why lost in holy wonder,

Why, O Lord, such love to me?

Hallelujah!

Grace shall reign eternally."

How different, then, was He who came in His Father's name to him who will come in his own name (John 5:43). The false prophet, we are informed, exerciseth all the power of the first beast, and that, too, in his presence. The two are clearly one in heart, mind, and power. It is unity, but diabolical. The power is from beneath. He bows almost all hearts to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He works miracles, and they are mighty to deceive all those who walk by sight and sense. How solemn to think that these things are shortly about to come to pass. How busily the powers of darkness are engaged to bring about this crisis; and how needful that believers should believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, and test everything by the written word.

Christ wrought miracles, and so will the false Christ; for, as we have previously noticed, Satan deceives by imitating. The counterfeit of true Christianity is all around us, and is rapidly going into infidelity. In days of old, God's power was manifested in fire coming down from heaven to consume the burnt offering and the fat (Lev. 9:24). Again, there went out fire from the Lord in devouring judgment on those who sinned in His service (Lev. 1:2). When Solomon finished the building of the temple, the presence and power of God were manifested by fire coming down from heaven and consuming the burnt offering and sacrifices (2 Chron. 7:3). We also find, that when Elijah testified for the living and true God before the apostate Israelites, God answered His servant by sending down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice (1 Kings 18). Afterwards, the prophet brought fire down from heaven and consumed the captains and fifties which the king sent for him (2 Kings 1). And so Satan, in the apocalyptic period, will energize the false Christ to deceive, by making fire to come down from heaven. We read that

he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do, in the sight of the beast (Rev. 13:13, 14).

This is the time of the "strong delusion" which Paul referred to when he said,

For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

Our chapter still further unfolds the deluding power of the false prophet. He commands men to make an image to the beast . . . and he had power to give breath unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should . . . speak (Rev. 13:14, 15). {See also in JND's translation.}

How terrible is this miraculous power of the wicked one — to give breath and speech to a dead, corruptible image of man's fashioning! How can those possibly escape the snare, who pride themselves on their intellectual powers, and boast of the light of reason and the potency of scientific research? What can philosophy say to this? Where can the reasoner hide himself? What will the freethinker's argument avail now? The unhesitating reply is, that all, save those whose trust is in God, and whose eye is on His revealed word, will be willingly enveloped in this thick cloud of strong delusion, and worship the beast. They will be like the luxurious Babylonians, and all the surrounding nations, languages, and tongues, who fell down to worship the image that Nebuchadnezzar set up, at the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music. This sure word of prophetic testimony shines like a bright light upon the believer's path. It shows us where the present workings are tending, and what a fearful crisis is at hand. We dare not shut our eyes to the elements that are abounding on every side so calculated to exalt man, set aside truth, dishonor God, and bring in the flood of infidelity, that makes ready for this terrible delusion. Happy indeed are those who are born again of the Spirit, and whose only standing now before the Lord is on the ground of the precious blood of Christ! Such have peace with God, are delivered from the power of darkness, are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and are commanded by the Holy Ghost to rejoice in the Lord always, and to give thanks to the Father for having made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. How precious is Jesus to such. Their song is —

“Oh, I am my Beloved's,

And my Beloved's mine!

He brings a poor, vile sinner

Into His 'house of wine.'

I stand upon His merit,

I know no other stand,

Not e'en where glory dwelleth

in Immanuel's land.”

In the days of “the beast” there will be no room for neutrality, or for men to content themselves, as many do now, by making no profession at all. Men must either be for God or for Satan. Then the words of Jesus, so slurred over now, will be fully proved —

He that is not with me is against me {Matt. 12:30; Luke 11:23}.

It really is so now, only it is not manifested. There will be the sentence of death then upon all who will not worship the beast. Those who do so will receive a mark, in order that those who do not bow down to the beast may be distinguished, and be known as men that none should either buy or

sell with. There will be no exception. Neither riches, age, influence, nor rank, will avail anything. Shall Christ or Antichrist be obeyed and worshipped? will be the question. We are told that he had power to

cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Rev. 13:15-17).

How injurious to souls, and destructive to the spread of the truth of God, is the mistaken thought, that the millennium is to be brought in by the gradual spread of the gospel. Alas! what awaits this poor doomed world! Who can say but that many around us may be taken in this snare which is coming on the face of the whole earth, and be led on by Satan to this time of "strong delusion"? How earnest it should make us in seeking the salvation of souls! and how responsible we are not to help on the spirit of worldliness, which is infidelity, and thus aid Satan in deceiving, instead of our being lights in the world!

With regard to the number of the beast, many have been the conjectures. It is better, however, to confess our ignorance where we have not clear light. Daniel tells us, that

the wise shall understand {Dan. 12:10};

so, when it is necessary, we may be assured that there will be no difficulty. We are informed that it is the

number of a man, and his number is 6 6 6 {Rev. 13:18}.

This shows us at least that there is no rest or perfection in connection with the beast; for the number seven speaks to us both of perfection and rest. We have repeatedly called attention to the former point in our previous meditations. With regard to the latter, we are told that God rested on the seventh day. It is a Sabbatic number. But with all the popularity, unity, power, and miracles of the beast, his number is that of a man — fallen, apostate man, in league with Satan, and has no element of perfection or rest in its constitution. Perfection and rest, I need scarcely say, are the two special characteristics of the gospel. It tells us of the perfection of the person of Jesus the Son of God, of whom the Father could say,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 3:17, 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17};

and the finished work of redemption which He accomplished on the cross, a savour of rest to God, and gives rest also to the sinner that believes.

"Jesus, I rest in Thee; Myself in Thee I hide;

Laden with guilt and misery,

Where could I rest beside?

'Tis on Thy meek and lowly breast

My weary soul alone can rest.

“Thou holy One of God!

The Father rests in Thee;

And in the savour of that blood,

Which speaks to Him for me.

The curse is gone; through Thee I'm blest;

God rests in Thee, in Thee I rest.”

The actings of the beast are repeatedly referred to in the following chapters of the Revelation; for his course is contemplated until the Lord Himself returns with His saints, as seen in the nineteenth chapter; so that we shall again have to notice his ways. May we be so able to bring the light of the future on our present path, that it may have practical power on our hearts and ways!

In the fourteenth chapter we have several distinct actions, but each giving us God's mind in relation to things then connected with the earth.

1. We have God and the Lamb in relation to the remnant of Israel.
2. God's testimony of the everlasting gospel to an apostate world.
3. God's witness to the fall of Babylon.
4. God's warning against worshiping the beast.
5. A voice from heaven pronouncing blessing on those who henceforth die in the Lord.
6. The harvest of the earth.
7. The vintage, or treading the winepress of the wrath of God.

Let us now look a little more particularly at each of these actions.

1. the Remnant of Israel

John says,

I looked, and; lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name (or, according to the best copies, His name and His Father's name) written in their foreheads {Rev. 14:1}.

They are presented in blessed rest and companionship with the Lamb. They are servants of God, sealed in their foreheads; and however much they had been oppressed by the beast, nevertheless they are seen as having proved the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the sure abiding of His word of promise, in caring for them and exercising His own power in bringing them through the fire. John, who had before seen them so hotly pursued by Satan, now has a vision of them with the Lamb; and not only so, but on mount Zion, the place of promised blessing on the earth, the metropolis of past and future national glory — the mountain, not of Sinai blackness and darkness, but the place of royal grace, where David and Solomon were honored by Jehovah, and where again the true Messiah, the greater than Solomon, shall yet manifest His wondrous power and grace, bring glory to His people Israel, and reign before His ancients gloriously. These hundred and forty and four thousand at that time will be blessed in the earth. It is prospective; for they can only be there with the Lamb after His appearing. They have not their Father's name, but His Father's name, written in their foreheads. Those who compose the Church of God, the body of Christ, — are a heavenly people, they know their sonship, have received the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, and know God as their Father. But these are not the Church; yet, like every redeemed company, whether heavenly or earthly, they owe all their blessings to the Lamb; for the blood of the Cross is the foundation of all lasting good.

While John was thus beholding this favoured remnant, he heard

a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder {Rev. 14:2}.

He heard also

the voice of harpers harping with their harps {Rev. 14:2}.

These, too, were heavenly sounds; for he goes on to tell us that they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before

the four living creatures, and the elders {see Rev. 14:3}

Let the reader notice here, that we have, first, the company on mount Zion; secondly, the elders in heaven; and, thirdly, harpers harping before the elders. Here are three distinct companies — one on earth, and two in heaven; and though all are redeemed and brought into their blessing by the blood of the Lamb, it is impossible to identify them, or to regard them as only different visions of the same company, for reasons assigned when considering the seventh chapter. The question for us now is, Who are the harpers?

1. We are distinctly told they are in heaven, singing as it were a new song before the elders.
2. There seems to be a remarkable sympathy between the “harpers” and the hundred and forty-four thousand on mount Zion, for no man but these could learn their song.
3. We only get one company in the Revelation having harps besides the elders in the fifth chapter, and these are that part of the faithful remnant who are martyred for not worshiping the beast, who get the victory over him by having a place in heaven on the sea of glass, and to them are given the harps of God. They are described in chapter 15 as singing the song of victory and of the Lamb; but it is Jewish in character, for they sing the song of Moses. They will reign with Christ. But further. In this first action in the chapter before us, the remnant are clearly spoken of as on mount Zion with the Lamb, as redeemed, as learning directly from heaven to sing the new song. We can understand what true sympathy there will be between the spared remnant on earth and the slaughtered remnant in heaven. We may notice further, that the hundred and forty-four thousand are called virgins, and have escaped the foul defilement of an adulterous generation; they have been true to God, and are only now engaged in following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. In their mouth is found no guile or lie, and they are without fault. The last words,

Before the throne of God {Rev. 14:5},

are omitted by the best critics. We must regard this first scene, in Rev. 14, on earth as anticipative, and as existing at the same time as the harpers seen in heaven in chapter 15.

There are two other points deserving special notice in the description here given of the remnant on mount Zion. First, they are redeemed from the earth from among men, the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb (Rev. 14:3, 4); and, secondly, they were faithful to God. The first point is of importance, because it shows us that this company is on the mount of earthly favour and blessing, redeemed from the earth — an election from among the people of Israel for the earth. There is no thought here of the Church, the body of Christ. It is a remnant of Israel, which will be brought through the great tribulation into the millennial blessing. With regard to their being the “firstfruits,” we are to understand the firstfruits from the earth for earthly blessing: the harvest of the earth is to follow. They, are pure and uncorrupted,

for they are virgins {Rev. 14:4}.

Living in a time when violence and the foulest corruption fill the earth, when the world is overrun with infidelity, men are under the

strong delusion {2 Thess. 2:11},

and the only Lord God in every way denied, they stand boldly out for the living and true God, and refuse to worship the beast; they are therefore not defiled, and in their mouth was found no guile — the lie of the beast. The power of the God of Abraham encircled them; and brought them through the time of temptation, and they are now with the Lamb, following Him whithersoever He goeth, and are without fault, or blameless.

2. the Everlasting Gospel

This is a remarkable testimony. It would seem to be the last before the great and terrible day of the Lord. The faithful had gone out with “the gospel of the kingdom,” and some of them had been put to death (Rev. 6:9). The two witnesses also testified, as we have seen in the eleventh chapter, until the beast killed them. And now the seer at Patmos says, that he saw

an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, etc. (Rev. 14:6)

We must not confound the different ways in which “gospel” is brought before us in the word of God. We have “the gospel preached to Abraham,” promising blessing through his seed. The gospel for the land of Canaan (Heb. 4:2). We read also of “the gospel of Christ,” which testifies of Christ’s work, — redemption through His blood. We have also “the gospel of God,” which enters into the eternal purpose, grace, and glory of God in our salvation in Christ, and through His blood. Then we have what Paul called his gospel —

my gospel {Rom. 2:16, 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8};

which may include

the mystery {Rom. 16:25}

revealed to him of the oneness of believers with Christ the Head in heaven. We read also of

the gospel of the kingdom {Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Mark 1:14},

which promises blessing in the earth to the faithful when Messiah shall appear, when it will be seen that those who endure to the end shall be saved. But here we have the

everlasting gospel.

At a time when infidelity and

great delusion {see 2 Thess. 2:11}

have overspread the world, and God is denied, not only as Redeemer, but also as Creator, when man will set himself up above all that is called God and be worshipped, this testimony to the living God, which has been true in all ages, and will be for ever, goes forth, that God is worthy to be acknowledged and glorified by man. It implies that there will be blessing to those who, refusing to worship the beast, do homage to the living and true God. The testimony is,

Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (Rev. 14:7).

It is proclaimed with a loud voice to them that

dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people (Rev. 14:6, 7).

It seems to be God's last publication of glad tidings, just before the time of actual judgment arrives, and it asks simply that the living God, the Creator, be given glory to, and owned and feared. Blessing in the earth has always been connected with the acknowledgment of the Creator.

To what a terrible crisis men are hastening! How lamentable is the fact, that, with all the world's boast of Christianity and enlightenment, Christ is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, — who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. But where will the Church be then? Blessed be God, we shall be vessels of mercy filled with Christ, and bringing glory and admiration to Christ, through what will be seen of Him in us.

When He shall come to be glorified IN

— not with, but in —

His saints and to be admired IN all them that believe {2 Thess. 1:10}.

Then the world will believe that the Father sent His Son to die for sinners, and that He loves us even as He loves Jesus.

“Jesus, Thou art enough

The mind and heart to fill;

Thy life-to calm the anxious soul

Thy love-its fear dispel.

“O fix our earnest gaze,

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That, with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see.”

3. the Fall of Babylon

Babylon is doomed. Her fall, which is by the hand of God, precedes the coming of the Lord. It has both a civil and religious aspect, and is a mighty system permeating almost every other, spreading its influence among all nations and ranks. It is a terribly corrupting system, dwelling in ease and luxury, and supported by the strength of the nations. She now says in her heart,

I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow {Rev. 18:7}.

But her loftiness must be laid low, her glitter pass away, her delusions exposed, and her adultery judged. Hence the announcement from heaven —

Babylon is fallen, is fallen . . . because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication {Rev. 14:8}.

Ah, how little do men think they are under a terribly deceiving power, when they take the intoxicating drink from the cup of this false system. So important a consideration is Babylon in the mind of God, that two chapters are occupied with its details, which we hope to consider in due time. Here her fall is simply announced.

4. God's Warning Against Worshiping the Beast

This testimony follows the two previous announcements, and is most plain, solemn, and decisive. It reminds us of another inspired testimony —

If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha {1 Cor. 16:22};

that is, accursed when the Lord cometh. How few think that we are rapidly hastening to this fearful crisis! Alas! man's pride and self-will hurry him on to judgment. This awful warning seems to be the last before Christ is actually revealed from heaven, and it is uttered with a loud voice:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his right hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Rev. 14:9-11).

Nothing can be plainer or more awful — drinking God's wrath, having no rest; and tormented day and night for ever and ever. Let us try to think of its dread reality; for it might make us more in earnest with souls, and more decided in our testimony. Multitudes are acting on the principles of the beast and his image, little thinking that by setting aside the authority of the Scriptures, and acting out a religiousness according to their own mind and will, they are thus helping on the work of the great deceiver, and rushing onward to the impending crisis.

The Lord pauses after this announcement to notice again the patience of the saints, the remnant who are passing through the fiery tribulation. Their zeal for the observance of God's commandments — the law of Moses — and also their faith in the coming Messiah, are not overlooked by Him.

5. the Voice From Heaven

This is very remarkable, but beautifully fitting in with the character of the whole chapter. For one of the faithful remnant of Israel to die at this time would not be considered by them at all desirable, because they are expecting the Messiah to appear, and are looking forward to enjoy the glorious land with Him. This voice from heaven, therefore, is very tender of the Lord, and will be particularly cheering to any of those who may suffer death under the beast; for it assures them that they are still “blessed.” Though they die before Messiah comes to reign, and thus lose their earthly inheritance, yet being in the Lord they are peculiarly the “blessed”; and while the worshipers of the beast have no rest day nor night, they shall

rest from their labours, and their works do follow them {Rev. 14:13}.

They will have part in

the first resurrection {Rev. 20:4-6}.

There is nothing new in its being blessed to die in the Lord; but the peculiar application of this action to those who are the faithful in Israel is very interesting, and shows the graciousness of God.

From henceforth {Rev. 14:13}

shows that they get into their blessing immediately.

6. the Harvest of the Earth

We have had the “firstfruits” of the earth, now we have the harvest of the earth {Rev. 14:15}.

This is reaped at the coming of the Lord. The prophetic testimony to Israel was, not only that when the Messiah came He would tread down the wicked as ashes under the soles of His feet, but that, as the Sun of righteousness, He would arise upon Israel with healing in His wings. Thus blessing to the elect nation, and judgment on the wicked, attends the revelation of the Lord from heaven. Isaiah says of this time,

The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come {Isa. 63:4}.

We get some account of the former in the concluding action of this chapter, and it is more fully brought out in the nineteenth chapter.

The harvest of the earth

shows us the latter. It is the Son of man, making the cloud His chariot, as in Rev. 1:7, crowned with a golden crown, and having in His hand a sharp sickle, with which He gathers to His bosom the fruit of His own sowing. Angels are associated with the Lord in the work. It is evidently the end of the age of Matt. 13, when the wheat is gathered into the barn; and the next action shows us the tares under the wrath of God. There is no idea here of the resurrection of the dead, or of any being removed to heaven, but of gathering the living righteous — reaping the wheat. A separation between good and bad, and judgment on the latter, constitute the instruction of the last two scenes in this chapter. The Lord is coming to establish His millennial kingdom in righteousness. He will therefore sever the wicked from among the just, and take out of His kingdom them that offend and do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire. The seer says,

I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle, and the earth was reaped (Rev. 14:14-16).

7. Treading the Winepress

This is not the harvest, but the vintage, gathering and treading grapes fully ripe. Now Satan works in sowing tares, and God bears with it till the iniquity is full. Christ is the true vine, and Israel is called a vine brought out of Egypt; but this is called

the vine of the earth {Rev. 14:16}.

Not connected with Christ risen and ascended into heaven; it is carnal, Satanic, earthly religion. The tares are the children of the wicked one. It may be apostate Jews and apostate Gentiles, but now they are fully ripe. They have unmixed judgment — wrath without any mercy. The extent is beyond anything the world has ever known. It may be figurative, but we are surely to understand by it its unparalleled character.

And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs (Rev. 14:20).

Chapters 15, 16: the Martyred Remnant and the Seven Seals

{Introduction}

In these two chapters we have another section of the book, which gives us the account of the outpouring of the seven vials. Terrible judgments as they are, they are followed by the Lord Himself coming in flaming fire. But, as we have previously seen in the Apocalypse, so here, the heart is relieved from the sorrows of the outpoured wrath of God, by a parenthetical announcement of a saved remnant standing in joy and blessing before the throne.

The fifteenth chapter opens by telling us, that John

saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God {Rev. 15:1}.

It is sad to think that the awful doom which awaits men is so unheeded. God speaks once, yea, twice, but man perceiveth it not. We have traced the opening of the seven seals, and the sounding of the seven trumpets in all their various characters of judgment, and now the last actings of Divine wrath, prior to the Lord taking everything into His own hands, are brought before us. It is the wrath of God in these chapters; the wrath of the Lamb will follow.

But before the prophet witnesses in the vision the long- deserved writhings of the profane, his eye is drawn to the sea of glass before the throne of God. In the fourth chapter, we noticed

a sea of glass like unto crystal {Rev. 4:6},

and unpeopled; but here it is mingled with fire, referring, perhaps, to the fiery trial of Antichrist which they had passed through, and occupied by them

that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name {Rev. 15:2}.

They are seen standing upon the sea of glass, in the attitude of thanksgiving and rejoicing, having harps of God {Rev. 15:2};

all expressive of marvelous deliverance and victory. They had known the deep sorrow and distress of the time of Jacob's trouble, and they got victory over the beast, not by an arm of flesh, but by faith; and though by death they lost the place of blessing on the earth, they found it more than made up by a place of resurrection- joy and gladness given them before the throne of God.

Who are the people here spoken of? Let their own utterances tell us. They do not sing the new song of the fifth chapter, or the song of the seventh chapter; neither are they described as coming out of every nation, as we find there; but they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. It is a song of redemption, both by power and by blood; but why the song of Moses? Is it not to show us that the singers are on Old Testament ground — in other words, pious Jews, faithful to Moses' law, and hoping for the kingdom to be set up on earth? Are not these

people a remnant the saints described by Daniel (Dan. 7:21), and which we saw suffering under the beast in the thirteenth chapter of the Apocalypse? Their song, too, seems in harmony with the spirit of the remnant often brought before us in the psalms, as speaking of the judgment and power of God, which would subdue all nations to Himself. This song is, in principle, much like the song of Moses in the book of Exodus. They say,

Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of nations! [Margin.] Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name; for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest {Rev. 15:3, 4}.

The difference between this utterance and the new song of the fifth chapter is most striking, so that it is impossible to identify them. The whole company stands before us as another witness of the faithfulness of God to those who, in any dispensation, make God and the Lamb their refuge, and thus find shelter from impending wrath. The 20th chapter shows us that those who thus get the victory over the beast and his image are in the first resurrection (Rev. 4, 5) Before closing our remarks on this portion, it may be well to say that the marginal reading,

king of nations,

is preferable to

king of saints,

because the Scripture nowhere teaches that Christ stands to us in the relationship of king. It is true that He is Lord of all; but our hope is to share His throne with Him, instead of being reigned over by Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The Seven Vials

After this, the seer looked, and,

behold the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened {Rev. 15:5},

and the whole scene is expressive of wrath coming out from the sanctuary of God. There is not a cheering ray. The whole temple is filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power, and no one was able to enter into the temple; for the seven angels are charged with the seven last plagues, and are sent forth to execute on guilty man the wrath of God. How very solemn! Happy those who now, while the gospel is preached, heed the warning, and flee from the wrath to come, by taking refuge in the precious blood of the Son of God. The time will come when it will be too late. With many, we fear, the hardening process is going on, and will increase till they deny the only Lord God, both as the Creator of the universe and Redeemer of His people. Praise God that the gospel of His grace is still preached, that the arms of pardoning mercy are still opened wide, and that God is the Savior and everlasting Friend and Father of all who believe on the Lord Jesus. Blessed be God, at this moment we can say —

“Great grace there is for sinners great,

Rich grace for those who’re poor,

Almighty grace to keep the weak;

Come ye, and test its power.

“Infinite grace for finite worms;

O Lord; how good Thou art

Unto poor sinners who are vile!

Sweet Jesus, take my heart!”

We should notice that one of the four living creatures is here seen again acting apart from the elders, and doing that which seems very unlike the business of sinners saved by grace, namely, giving the angels the vials of wrath to discharge on the men who had the mark of the beast. Our place is association with Christ in judgment. I am aware that some dear servants of the Lord have considered the living creatures to be the Church, but this does not seem to me capable of being established, for reasons assigned when considering the 4th and 5th chapters. But, as before observed, those who hold that the living creatures are the Church, are bound to admit that the saints are caught up to heaven before the great tribulation, because here we see one of the living creatures in heaven engaged in giving the angels vials of wrath to pour out on men, the worshipers of the beast and his image on earth.

One of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power: and no one was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled (Rev. 15:7, 8; see Rev. 16:2).

The First Vial

The solemn moment will come when the command will be given, and the vials be poured out. To the seven angels it will be said,

Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth (Rev. 16:1).

This series of judgments evidently begins after the beast has been fully manifested, and his image set up; for the first vial is poured out on those who are connected with the abomination of desolation.

The first went and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image (Rev. 16:2).

The Second Vial

In the outpouring of the vials, we do not find their effect limited to a third part, or a fourth part, as the trumpets and seals were; and the character of the judgments is not only more extensive, but more severe. If the apocalyptic judgments have a special bearing on the nations where the light of the gospel and outward privileges have so abounded, now they are given up in a thoroughly apostate state to the wrath of God. The second vial is poured on the sea, bringing death on everything.

The second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea (Rev. 16:3).

The Third Vial

The rivers and fountains now become blood, and the angel of the waters acknowledges the just retribution of God upon men in thus executing judgment.

Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard [not another out of, but] the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments (Rev. 16:5-7).

How little do men think that God will act in retributive justice! How awful is the thought, that men, with all their boastful cries of “improvement” and “progress,” are hurrying on to the time of God’s anger! But so it is. He will yet arise, and require all the righteous blood that has been shed, and avenge His own elect. Again, we are forcibly reminded of the safety of those who are sheltered by the precious blood of Christ.

The Fourth Vial

Men are

burned [margin] with a great heat (Rev. 16:9 see also New Trans., JND),

and blaspheme the name of God. There is a remarkable similarity in the spheres of judgment in the first four trumpets and vials — the earth, sea, rivers, fountains, and sun being smitten in each; the vials, as before noticed, being more extensive and severe. And as we saw in former judgments, so it is recorded now, that instead of these things leading men to repent, it brings out horrible blasphemy. How bad is the human heart! How oft should the believer's cry to God be —

"Take Thou my heart, and let it be

For ever close to all but Thee!"

How strikingly in the apocalyptic judgments we see that terror and judgment harden instead of soften the human heart; so here again, in the midst of their sufferings,

they blasphemed the name of God, who hath power over these plagues, and they repented not to give Him glory (Rev. 16:9).

The Fifth Vial

This outpouring of God's wrath is directed to the seat of the beast. As in the days of Pharaoh, the people suffered for some time, while the wicked king went free; so now those who worship the beast have the vengeance of God executed upon them, while the judgment of the beast is postponed till the Lord Himself comes to cast him alive into the lake of fire. This will be a time of terror, suffering, and distress. The kingdom of the beast will be full of darkness, and men will gnaw their tongues for pain. Surely this very earth shall witness many at that time weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth. It would seem as if the darkness and torment of hell had overtaken men on earth, so terrible will be the outpoured wrath of God. But what effect will it have? Will these judgments break men's hearts, and subdue them to the living God? Ah, no! We are told here again, that

men blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds (Rev. 16:11).

The Sixth Vial

The first point noticed here is, that it is poured

upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings [not of, but] which come from the east might be prepared {Rev. 15:12};

that is, that the present barrier to the kings of the east mingling with the western powers should be removed, and thus the great gathering of kings and people for their final overthrow might be accomplished. The river Euphrates, which formed the eastern boundary of the land of Canaan, is a deep and wide river, about 1500 miles in length, and in some places nearly a mile in breadth; so that we can easily see what a barrier it must be to persons wishing to cross it. This, however, is to be removed in God's time of wrath, and the spirit of gathering together and centralization, now so rapidly growing, will, with special help from Satan and his allies, speedily bring about the awful crisis.

John tells us that he saw

three unclean spirits like frogs {Rev. 16:13}

acting upon the kings of the earth, and the whole world — the whole habitable world — to gather them together to the great day of God Almighty. This power is Satanic. The unclean spirits come

out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet; for they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, etc. {Rev. 16:13, 14}

Like frogs silently lurk about in hidden places, unperceived, so are these; and they overcome by the miraculous signs and lying wonders which they accomplish and gather men to the great battle. It is said that

He gathered them together {see Rev. 16:14},

and in the 14th verse, they (the spirits of devils) gather them; that is, that though Satan and his allies be the instruments, it is to carry out God's purpose, so that it may be truly said that

He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).

Men little think what Satan is doing by the confederacies of the day. Is it possible that the fraternizing of nations, and the various minor associations among men, can be already the beginning of this great and awful gathering together? The question is, What is man's object now? Is it self or Christ? Satan is ever opposed to Christ, and acts on man's selfishness. The world, too, lieth in the wicked one. How solemn it is that the dragon (Satan), the beast, and the false prophet, give birth to these three unclean spirits like frogs, and that they gather men together.

The Seventh Vial

This vial is poured into the air; then a voice out of heaven utters,

It is done (Rev. 16:17),

and many terrible things follow. The great city — Babylon — (see Rev. 14:8; 18:10) is divided into three parts. The cities of the nations fall. Great Babylon, too, now comes into remembrance before God, to receive the cup of the fierceness of His wrath. God shakes terribly the earth. Every island flees away, and the mountains are not found. A great hail falls upon men out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent; and here again we are told that men blasphemed God because of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great (Rev. 16:18-21).

As we saw in connection with the opening of the seventh seal, and sounding of the seventh trumpet, the temple of heaven brought before us, and voices and thunderings and an earthquake, so now

there came a great voice out of the temple, . . . and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great {Rev. 17:18}.

This, I believe, takes us to the time of the personal coming of the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory — the great day of the wrath of the lamb.

It is remarkable that, as we noticed between the sixth and seventh seals, and the sixth and seventh trumpets, so between the sixth and seventh vials a parenthesis occurs. In this last, the Lord is announced as coming as a thief in judgment — introducing the day of the Lord — when we shall come out of heaven with Him. (See Rev. 19:11-14.) He says,

Behold, I come as a thief {Rev. 16:15}.

Christ will suddenly come upon this world as a thief.

The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night {1 Thess. 5:2}.

But we know that He will not come to us as a thief.

Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief (1 Thess. 5:2, 4).

But while judgment is threatened, there seems also to be a gleam of mercy rejoicing against judgment (Rev. 16:15). It intimates that a remnant will be watching for the Messiah (and we gather from other Scriptures that such will be the case), and others are spoken of as having the shame of their nakedness made manifest.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame {Rev. 16:15}.

Chapters 17, 18 Babylon the Great {Introduction}

The latter chapters of the Book of Revelation bring before us some remarkable instruction in the way of contrast. It seems as if the lines that Satan pursued, and the actings of God, were here put side by side to show the just judgment upon men, the crushing of Satan, and the establishment of the kingdom and glory of God.

We have previously noticed the devil's power of mimicry, his artful way of having something outwardly resembling what is of God, by which to accomplish his own evil purposes of dishonoring Christ and deceiving the world. These things are very manifest in the closing scenes of this marvelous book, and they help us much to understand things as they now are, as well as to perceive to what they are rapidly hastening.

In the 17th and 18th chapters we have a woman and a city symbolically set before us; and in the following chapters we have also a woman and a city. The one filthy and doomed to eternal destruction; the other holy and having the glory of God. How unspeakably wide the contrast! Both these scenes were shown to John by an angel, perhaps the same angel, as the description is much the same in both instances. (Compare Rev. 17:1, with Rev. 21:9.) In the one he saw

the great whore (Rev. 17:1),

in the other

the Bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9).

To see the false and corrupt one, he had to go into the wilderness

— the place outside God's presence, her proper sphere; to behold the other, the Bride, "dressed in beauty not her own," he was carried into a great and high mountain, when he saw her descending out of heaven from God. But in both instances we are told that he was

in the Spirit {Rev. 17:3, 21:10}

in order to see these things. This is an important point to observe; for it teaches us that we need the Holy Ghost to perceive the workings and devices of Satan, as much as we do to discern the ways and purposes of God. How is it that many are in such ignorance of these things, and judge them matters of no importance? How is it that some persons, who are surrounded with corrupt Christianity, and often hear about the standing and glory of the co-heirs of Christ, yet never seem to perceive and grasp either of them as realities? Is it not because they are not shown them by the Holy Ghost? They may try to grasp them intellectually, and fail. Reason and argument are insufficient for apprehending spiritual mysteries. Babylon is called a

mystery {Rev. 17:5};

Christ and the Church

the mystery {see Eph. 5:32}.

Both are now revealed to us, and the revelations are to be received in all simplicity. For this, we need to be

in the Spirit.

These things were shown to John; the angel said,

Come hither; I will shew unto thee {Rev. 17:10}

Let us never forget that the Spirit of truth, who guides into all truth, takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us, and that it is by faith alone we receive God's revelation, whether we can understand it or not.

As we have said, Satan is an imitator, so that we have in the latter chapters of this book similarities as well as contrasts. God has a bride, Satan has a harlot. God's people are seated in the heavenlies, so we are repeatedly told that the woman sitteth; the former are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: the latter sits upon the beast. The harlot is "arrayed" in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones and pearls: but to the bride was granted that she should be "arrayed" in fine linen, clean and white. The harlot holds a golden cup in her hand, to give drink to thirsty souls; but only to deceive and intoxicate — to act upon the senses, having no power effectually to relieve a burdened heart and conscience. It is a bewitching cup. It is full of wine of fornication, making all drunk who take it, and hardens the heart toward Christ. It is brim full of wine of filthiness and abomination. But, thank God, there is another cup which souls may drink — a cup of blessing, full of peace and consolation and joy for troubled, sin-sick souls; it is the cup of the Savior's blood, full of the love of God to sinners, which draws the heart to God, and keeps the heart for God.

The cup of blessing which we bless {1 Cor. 10:16}

cheers both God and man, fills the soul with joy and gladness, and restores the distrustful heart to happy confidence in God. It is the best wine, which makes the lips to speak (Cant. 7:9); it makes the whole soul to enter into the unutterable sorrows of Jesus on the cross, when

He poured out His soul unto death {see Isa. 53:12},

and separates the affections and desires unto God and Christ in the heavenlies, and therefore from this present evil world. It is

"The balm of life, the cure of woe,

The measure and the pledge of love;

The sinner's refuge here below,

The angels' theme in heaven above."

The harlot's cup can only gratify the fleshly appetite for a passing moment, and end in wailing and gnashing of teeth; it stands in widest contrast with the

living water {John 4:10; 7:38}

of the gospel, the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The woman's heart and desires are gratified with the kings of this world; the inhabitants of the earth drink of her intoxicating cup; thus she receives a wide and popular patronage: but those who are with the Lamb are called (let us think of this) and chosen and faithful (Rev. 17:14). Oneness of mind may characterize those who are in league with the harlot, as one mind and one judgment should characterize God's children now; but her doom shall come, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, while the Bride shall shine in unutterable beauty and uncreated light. In pride and self-esteem, the harlot has long said,

I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow {Rev. 18:7}

[while the saints are mourning the absence of their loving Lord]; yet her judgment and eternal abasement shall quickly come. And while the Church of God now knows tribulation and suffering and rejection for Christ's sake, the wicked woman prospers in riches, successful commerce, and abundance of delicacies; yet suddenly — in one hour — shall God's judgment overtake her. Her mirth then will for ever cease, her light be for ever extinguished, and her dainty and goodly things for ever depart from her. Her name is written in her forehead, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth {Rev. 17:5},

but is read only by those who are taught of God's Spirit. Alas! how unlike God's loved ones! of whom it is said,

They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).

We have already seen the fall of Babylon referred to both in the 14th and 16th chapters. In the 17th and 18th chapters we have details of her characteristics. She is presented under two symbols, a woman and a city, and they seem both needed; the one to show us her principles, the other the results of her harlotry. We see, in the following chapters, in the Bride and the city, the relationship of affection in which she stands to God and the Lamb, and her subsequent display in glory, having the glory of God.

Babylon means confusion — the cunning union of things Divine and worldly; the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, trafficking with the things of God. It has therefore both a religious and civil aspect. It is the old sin of Cain, who, with a false religion, murdered his righteous brother, deliberately went out from the presence of God, and obtained a place of ease, luxury, and influence in the earth. We do violence to truth to limit Babylon to Romanism. It abounds in Protestantism, and in every thing and place where the name of Christ is used to sanction worldliness; or where the truth of revelation is used for worldly advancement, instead of for the glory of God. This is unfaithfulness to Christ; it is referred to by the apostle James when he says,

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

This is very solemn and searching, and it behoves us to see well to it that we are spiritual, and not carnal, cleaving to the Lord Himself with full purpose of heart, instead of to this present evil world. Paul was very watchful on this point in his care over the saints. He says,

I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:2, 3).

Babylon of the Apocalypse cannot be a literal city, because we are told that in her was found the blood of all that were slain upon the earth (Rev. 18:24); but it is religious corruption, which, like Babylon of old, often takes God's people captive. It is a widespread system: man in the flesh taking up and corrupting the things of God, making himself or the world the object, instead of God's glory; ensnaring the affections from God and Christ, and filling the mind with earthliness. It began very early in the world, and our Lord seemed to refer to it when He said to the Pharisees,

Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar (Matt. 23:34, 35).

Oh, beloved in the Lord! let us watch against the spirit of Babylon which surrounds us on almost every hand, for it easily and plausibly insinuates itself. What harm is there, says one or another, in going here and there, and seeing this and that? Can we do it in obedience to our Lord? Is it not a temptation to take a sip out of the harlot's intoxicating cup? Let us feed upon Christ; for His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed: this will strengthen our faith and love, and make us abhor instead of taste the harlot's cup.

"Redouble your precautions, O ye saints! –

Aware of the destroyer! Stop the gaps

Where, entering silently, he spoils the vines.

Be cautious! for your enemy is strong;

To sleepless malice adds perfected craft,

And spiteful certainty of shortening rule;

To know if ye are Christ's, your struggling souls

Resist a baffled and defeated foe.

'Take ye these foes,' who do contrive the woe

Of God's Jerusalem! Expose their craft!

Seize your keen weapons, servants of the Lord,

And sword in hand, yea, in your armour, build

Her walls and fences that are broken down;

The weakest is made strong who cleaves to Christ."

The former part of the seventeenth chapter gives us the principles of the false woman — Babylon the Great; the latter part gives us the interpretation of the symbols.

She is seen sitting upon

many waters {Rev. 17:1}

having seven heads, and ten horns {Rev. 17:3}.

Her raiment is purple and scarlet colour, and she is decked with

gold, and precious stones, and pearls {Rev. 17:4}.

She holds in her hand a golden cup, brim full of abominations and filthiness. Abominations in the Old Testament often mean idolatries. (See Deut. 32:16; 1 Kings 11:5-7.) Her outward appearance is thus symbolized. Her character is, that she is drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. She plays the harlot with kings, and she has intoxicated the inhabitants of the earth with her wine. Thus is she both corrupt and corrupting. Mystery is written upon her forehead, and her name is,

The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth {Rev. 17:5}.

Her rest is in the world that crucified the Lord of glory. The nations are her support. Her repose is in the bosom of the people. Her evil heart knows no higher range than self-pleasing, walking before men, and the spirit of the world which is energized by Satan. Her display is in the very things which the Scripture enjoins modest women to refuse, namely,

gold, and pearls, and costly array {see 1 Tim. 2:9}.

Her great object is to corrupt others by her intoxicating wine. Her enmity to God is manifested by her thirst for the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. Such are some of the characteristics of this unchaste woman; and let us never forget that the beloved apostle, at Patmos, needed to be in the Spirit to detect her corrupt character and ways, and so do we. The two evils of the flesh, corruption and violence, mentioned in Gen. 6:12, 13, are seen in full growth in the woman and the beast.

The explanation of the symbolic description of the woman, and of the beast which carrieth her, is brought before us in the eighth and following verses.

The Beast

The scarlet-coloured beast which carried the woman is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition. This shows its Satanic origin and hellish destiny. It has seven heads and ten horns, both without crowns, and may be easily identified with the beast of the thirteenth chapter, which we judge to be the Roman empire in its future resuscitated state. We are told also, that the beast was, and is not, and yet shall be; thus giving it a past and future, but not a present existence. And is not this exactly the fact with regard to the Roman empire? It has been in full energy, and for a long time it has not been known as an empire: but by and by the image of Daniel will be manifested in ten toes, or kingdoms, and the empire be revived — only, be it remembered, under special Satanic energy;

it shall ascend out of the bottomless pit {Rev. 17:8}.

we must also regard the beast as headed up in a man who wields its entire power; for the beast is spoken of in both these aspects: and then

the false prophet {see Rev. 13:11-17}

will compel all to bow down and worship the beast, and to have his name in their foreheads or hands. Thus we are told again, what has been previously remarked, that this Son of perdition will be the object of a world-wide admiration. It is said that

they that dwell upon the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall come again (see Rev. 17:8).

None are free from this delusion but those whose names are in the Book of Life. It may be well to observe here, in passing, that the Church is spoken of as chosen in Christ, not from, but before the foundation of the world. The saints who suffer under the beast will not be the Church — the body of Christ; for, as we have repeatedly noticed, we shall have been caught up before these terrible days, to meet the Lord in the air; but they will be Jewish saints, and are spoken of as in connection with that which is from the foundation of the world.

Some have thought that the seven-hilled city is Rome, because we are told that

the seven heads upon which the woman sitteth are seven mountains {see Rev. 17:9};

others have gone so far as to state, that because of this, Babylon the Great must be Popery, as if this widespread system were limited to that terrible work. Rome, however, as the seven-hilled city, may be referred to, but we must not limit our view of these principles to Rome. And while Romanism is certainly a large example of Babylon, and most emphatically referred to here, we may be assured that Babylon the Great abounds also in Protestantism, or wherever the world's support is resorted to in connection with the name and work of the Lord. It is difficult almost to say where Babylon is not; for when we see the line of demarcation between the Church and the world

so obliterated, and remember how perfectly distinct the teaching of our Lord and of His apostles was as to the opposite character of flesh and spirit, the world and the Church, we must conclude that Babel, or confusion, must be wherever the Lord is not wholly followed, His word fully obeyed, His Holy Spirit practically honored.

But is not the true explanation of these seven hills to be found in the neat verse? May we not regard the seven mountains, or heads, as seven potentates or forms of government; for mountains may be regarded as representative of power or authority, the woman finding her rest in those national authorities. But however this may be, we are distinctly told immediately after, that

they are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short time (see Rev. 17:10).

That the five kings are five potentates which had passed away before the apocalyptic visions were made known to John, that one was then in existence, and another was to appear, and continue for a short time, we should be ready enough to admit, for it is obvious; but here again we find this last potentate, whose duration unreasonable, that a system, which has existed for so many centuries should be understood to be that which only continues for a short space, or a little time, especially when this king is put in connection with five other kings which had passed away.

There is now a remarkable turn given to the description of the seven heads, for an eighth head springs up, which is said to be of the seven. It is the beast — the Man of Sin, who impersonates the Roman empire, and in this description is identified with it. We are told,

The beast that was, and is not, he even is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition {Rev. 17:11}.

And further, we are informed that he, though springing out of the seven heads, and of course coming after them, will be in league with the ten horns, the kings of the resuscitated Roman empire, the ten kingdoms of Daniel, which are brought upon the scene by and by, but only to continue for a brief period. All that is revealed seems to show us the rapidity with which events follow each other as the day approaches.

The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast (Rev. 17:12).

These kings are all confederated together, fraternized, as some would say, and it is for the beast to help on the Satanic scheme of this Son of perdition. What an association! What a union! What a combination of human and Satanic energy! Ah! union and unity are common words in our day, and give impetus to principles of action on all sides; but we do well to ask the question, Is the proposed unity with Christ, or against Him? for He said,

He that is not with me is against me {Matt. 12:30, Luke 11:23}.

This is getting more and more manifest, and ere long every individual will have to take his stand either with Christ or against Him.

As to these kings, we are told,

These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast (Rev. 17:13).

The active energy of this confederacy of the beast and kings of the earth is purely against Christ, but, as we might expect, their unity and co-operation only end in their everlasting shame and destruction.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

The last clause shows us that the Church is with Christ at that time; the words, called, and chosen, and faithful, are exactly those used by the apostle in addressing the Church of God.

elucidation of the ten horns. The prophet saw a fourth beast,

diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn. . . . In this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit. . . . I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. . . . I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth; and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them. . . . And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him (Dan. 7:7-27).

Thus we see that the beast with ten horns, which Daniel saw, remarkably corresponds with the ten-horned beast of the Apocalypse, and the other little horn of Daniel which came up after them, with the eighth king of the Revelation. The saints, too, of Daniel — first under the persecution of the great oppressor, and then, when God undertakes for them, brought into the blessing of the millennial kingdom, the hope of all true Israelites — correspond with the saints of the book of Revelation. They get into their promised blessing of the kingdom with judgment (see Isa. 1:27); on the other hand, we enter our eternal and heavenly blessing by being caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

We are further told, that the kings and the beast will be confederated together against the woman. The many waters, on which we saw her sitting in the first verse, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues (Rev. 17:15);

that is, the inhabitants of many countries. This is her rest at present; but, if I mistake not, it is already beginning to be disturbed, and they will soon shake her off. Would that it were for something better; but, alas! they prefer their own carnal liberty and self-will. Their minds will become changed towards her, and they will hate her. Thus nominal Christianity will end in open infidelity. Now most men are pleased with some sort of religion, but ere long they will find their liberty and pleasure only in open defiance of the living and true God. The judgment, however, of this woman, is of God. He makes the wrath of the wicked to execute His own counsels; for God will put it into their hearts to fulfil His will. This is very solemn. If the judgment of God came severely upon apostate Israel, how much more terrible shall the stroke be upon the apostate Church.

beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate

and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put it in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree [or act with one mind], and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. (Rev. 17:16, 17).

Thus we see that this confederacy will hate the harlot, rob her of her riches, strip her of her costliness, deprive her of all she values, and eat her up, to advance the kingdom of the beast. All this God will accomplish, in His own time and way, for His own glory; and show that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God, and that He can take the wise in their own craftiness.

The Woman

The symbolic character of the woman is referred to in the last verse of this chapter, and it links us on with the following chapter, for she is called both a woman and a city. This shows how entirely symbolic the whole account is, and could not be understood to be a material city. She is described as having kingship over kings.

The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth {Rev. 17:18}.

In the seventeenth chapter we saw the instrumentality employed by God in the judgment of Babylon the Great, but in the eighteenth chapter God alone appears as having taken vengeance upon this terrible abomination, which has both a religious and a civil, or rather a political aspect.

It is not the sin of adultery which is charged upon Babylon, but fornication. Israel was addressed by the prophet Jeremiah as married to Jehovah (Jer. 3:14); and Ezekiel says,

Thou hast not been an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; but as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband (Ezek. 16:31, 32).

But the Church is only espoused, having the marriage in anticipation; therefore the sin of those professing to be betrothed to the Son of God, who depart in heart and ways from Him for the hire of the seducer, is fornication, or harlotry. To confess Christ with the lip, while the affections and desires of the soul are going out after other objects, such as the pride, lust, and gain of this world, is the special sin here marked out. Happy those whose affections are so set upon Jesus as to be able to say in truth

He is all my salvation, and all my desire {see 2 Sam. 23:5}.

The 18th chapter opens by John telling us that he saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory, It was another angel, not the same angel that showed him the woman and the beast, and expounded the mysteries in the previous chapter. This latter angel makes a terrible announcement:

He cried mightily with a loud voice, saving, Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Rev. 18:2).

Such will be Babylon: utterly devilish and unclean, given up to Satan and his hosts, because nations, kings, and merchants, through her fleshly lusts, have gratified their desires in trafficking with her. Nations drank her intoxicating wine; the kings of the through her aid.

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies (Rev. 18:3).

How easy it is for a man to call himself a Christian, and yet in heart and soul to be of the world! How ready is man to acknowledge God with his lips, while his heart is far from Him! But God must have realities. He will have His beloved Son honored. He is the God of judgment, and by Him actions are weighed. He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men, and from Him no secrets are hid. How little, perhaps, do any of us think what is going on all around, through the harlot's intoxicating cup. The process may be a very gradual one in some cases; but the golden cup attracts the eye; the sparkling jewels and costly attire are strikingly alluring to the senses; and at last the bewitching cup is sipped. Its inebriating effects soon follow, and madly urge the soul to drink again the hellish mixture, which falsely promises both worlds, by utterly confusing law and gospel, Church and world, Christ and Belial. It is, indeed, a deadly poison, filling the mind with vain-glorious thoughts and self-inflated notions, while it hardens the heart against Christ, and sears the conscience as to the grace and truth of God. Hence deliberate overtures are made to the world for the sake of earthly gain and her perishing honors, and moth-eaten and corrupting treasures are most cordially embraced.

Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world;

they increase in riches (Psa. 73:12).

How different are the effects of drinking the cup of blessing of the precious blood of Christ! The more we drink of that cup, the more are we filled with the love of God, strengthened with might in the inner man, comforted and enlarged; we realize, too, the hollow and dissatisfying character of this guilty world, and our affections and longings of soul are drawn toward Christ, and God, and glory! While we drink of the cup of blessing, and contemplate the sorrows of the Son of God upon the tree, our very bowels are so moved toward our living, loving Jesus, that we cannot help exclaiming, —

“See from His head, His hands, His feet,

Sorrow and love flow mingled down;

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,

Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were an offering far too small;

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my heart, my life, my all.”

The testimony of this angel is followed by another voice out of heaven to God's people, for, as we have before seen, God will have a people in the earth at that time, whom He will sustain, and bring through the fiery trial, the

great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21).

The voice says:

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues (Rev. 18:4).

And if true, then, for saints having an earthly calling and hope, how far deeper the obligation of those who are one with a rejected Christ,

holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling {Heb. 3:1}.

Here seems to be the peculiarly solemn bearing of these chapters on us. The book, we know, is prefaced with the promise of blessing to those who read or hear it, and keep those things which are written therein. Nothing can be plainer than the path marked out for the members of the body of Christ, of separation from all the rapidly growing principles of Babylon the Great. It is high time to move onward, in obedience to our Lord Jesus. It is pleasant and interesting to consider the various details of prophetic truth which God has so mercifully revealed; but if they do not lead us to action, may we not fear lest the light that is in us be darkness? May the Lord help us! It is very solemn to stand in the bright light of the sure word of prophecy. There is such a thing as being partakers of others' sins, and we are warned concerning it by this voice from heaven. We dare not be neutral. Neither can we act as mere individuals, for we are members of one body — the body of Christ. We either do or do not have fellowship with sins. The sins of this harlot are very black; they are heaping up, already piled very high, and will quickly reach unto heaven, and then God's judgment must come. Are we in any wise partakers of her sins? Have we fully come out of her? God says,

Come out.

Have we heard and obeyed this word of the Lord? Let us not forget that Jesus said,

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . . He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings(John 14:21-24).

Let, us beloved, ponder the path of our feet. Let us search and see to what our hearts are attached. Is it really Christ we are serving? Are we giving Him His rightful place as our Lord, and acting worthy of His wondrous friendship? Are we minding earthly things? or are things above occupying our affections and desires? The iniquities of Babylon, so grievous in God's sight, are ripening for special judgment. Very soon it will be said,

God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double (Rev. 18:5, 6).

Self is Babylon's prevailing principle. How unlike the meek and lowly Jesus, who pleased not Himself, but could always say,

Not my will, but thine, be done {Luke 22:42}.

I do always those things which please Him {John 8:29}.

The Church of God, too, is spoken of as subject unto Christ; and true discipleship consists in denying self, taking up the cross, and following Christ. Babylon is not like this; — self-love,

self-seeking, self-reliance, and self-exaltation mark her, till her time of utter abasing come. Then it will be said,

How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; for she said in her

heart [how searching!] I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. THEREFORE shall her plagues come in one day; death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her (Rev. 18:7, 8).

When God judges, He shows Himself to be the Searcher of the heart. He knows what is underneath many a burning lip, and is able to judge righteously. And in Babylon, where there was luxuriousness and extravagance, He brings

famine;

where the heart boastingly said,

I shall see no sorrow,

He brings

death;

and makes the one who in self-exaltation said,

I sit a queen, and am no widow,

to feel the bitterness of

mourning.

The suddenness, violence, and final character of the judgment are clearly pointed out. So sudden, that we are told

her plagues shall come in one day {Rev. 18:8}.

In one hour is thy judgment come {Rev. 18:10};

in one hour so great riches is come to nought {Rev. 18:17};

in one hour is she made desolate {Rev. 18:19}.

Like the other judgments, when men are saying,

Peace and safety {1 Thess. 5:3},

then sudden destruction cometh; or, as at Belshazzar's impious feast, while the thousand lords and princes were merry with wine, praising the gods of gold and silver, and filled with the excitement of the royal revelry, in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote against the wall (Dan: 5:1-5).

The violence of Babylon's desolation and destruction is shown by a mighty angel, who

took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down (Rev. 18:21).

Ah, when God's wrath is kindled it will be full of fury and fiery indignation, which shall devour His adversaries.

As to the final character of the judgment, this is many times alluded to in this chapter.

No man buyeth their merchandise any more {Rev. 18:11}. The fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee,

and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all {Rev. 18:14}.

Babylon

shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee (Rev. 18:21-23).

We are elsewhere told, that

her smoke rose up for ever and ever (Rev. 19:3).

Such is the fearful and everlasting doom that awaits his false system. Let us now look at the persons who had fellowship with her iniquity, and therefore received of her plagues.

1. The kings of the earth weep and wail when they see the smoke of her burning. Their misery is great, when they think of that great city, that mighty city, and the abundance of her luxuries.
2. The merchants of the earth weep and lament also, because all their flourishing traffic is suddenly at an end.

The merchants . . . which were made rich by her stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping, and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! for in one hour so great riches is come to nought (Rev. 18:15-17).

3. The shipmasters and sailors and traders by sea weep too:

They cast dust upon their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! (Rev. 18:19).

Such are some of the distresses of those who are found associated with Babylon in that day. They seem, while on this earth, to be literally weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth.

But we must not pass over the long list of merchandise that characterizes that great city. There are twenty-eight things enumerated, and they are arranged in seven classes. The first is a list of ornaments, —

gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls {Rev. 18:12}.

The second class is costly and showy attire, —

fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet {Rev. 18:12}.

The third class is elegant and costly furniture, —

all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner of most precious wood, and of brass, and of iron, and marble {see Rev. 18:12}.

The fourth class is perfumery, —

cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense {Rev. 18:13}.

The fifth class is food, —

wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep {Rev. 18:13}.

The sixth class, splendid equipages, —

horses and chariots {Rev. 18:13}.

The seventh class, men's bodies and souls, —

slaves, and souls of men {Rev. 18:13}.

It is evident that this catalogue presents what the lusts and pride of men in all nations most seek after. Gold stands at the head of the list, because that is of the most value in man's esteem, and the souls of men at the bottom of the list, because the soul is of the least importance in man's account. Do we not see here some of the real actings of nominal Christianity? Hence salvation is the last thing that is considered; but, with true believers, the soul stands highest in the scale of importance, and the present possession of eternal life is the starting point.

We have purple and scarlet in this list, but no blue; for blue is typical of that which is heavenly, and according to God. The blue canopy over us tells us this; and we read that

the heavens declare the glory of God {Psa. 19:1}.

There is nothing of that which is above in Babylon; it is earthly, carnal, devilish, and its scarlet, like the colour of red earth, is in keeping with it.

But further. In the midst of all this misery on earth, at the desolating judgment of this harlot, the heart is relieved by the mind of heaven being introduced, and its warrant for rejoicing over it all (Rev. 18:20). The true rendering of the verse is,

Rejoice over her, heaven, and you saints, and apostles, and prophets; for God hath judged your judgment upon her.

This is an important point to notice. The order is the same as in Ephesians, — apostles and prophets, and not prophets and apostles. Had it been the latter, there might be some doubt as to whether Old Testament prophets or New Testament prophets were meant. We see also that they are associated with saints exactly corresponding with those who are Christ's at His coming, and

caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The heavenly saints, therefore, are above, while Babylon's judgment is going on in the earth; and they rejoice, while those who have been associated with the harlot, instead of with the Son of God, are weeping and wailing. All this, as we know, takes place before the Lord comes out of heaven, in flaming fire, to judge the world in righteousness. It is a blessed feature in the apocalyptic writings, that when the soul is saddened at contemplating the visions of God's judicial vengeance, we are every now and then reminded that our place is above, on thrones with the Lamb. Even now, as risen and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, we can sing,

"He comes — for oh! His yearning heart

No more can bear delay —

To scenes of full unmingled joy

To call His bride away.

This earth, the scene of all His woe,

A homeless wild to thee,

Full soon upon His heavenly throne

Its rightful King shall see.

Thou, too, shalt reign — He will not wear

His crown of joy alone!

And earth His royal Bride shall see

Beside Him on His throne.

Then weep no more! 'tis all thine own —

His crown, His joy Divine;

And, greater far than all beside,

HE, HE HIMSELF is thine."

With all Babylon's greatness, revelry, and mirth, the awful conclusion of her description is, that

in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth (Rev. 18:24).

Does not this solemn account remind us of our Lord's warning to those who profess to be His servants, and yet find companionship with the enemies of the Lord?

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:48-51).

Chapter 19 – 21:1-8: the Marriage of the Lamb, the Reign of Christ, and the Eternal State

We had the joy in heaven alluded to in the previous chapter. It is not now joy in the presence of the angels of God over repenting sinners, but it is a time of heavenly rejoicing, because the great harlot is judged, and brought under God's everlasting wrath. Those who seek their rest in the world's religion, and look for earthly glory, will find their end to be bitterness and wailing. The Church's hope is the coming of the Son from heaven. We expect to partake of the glory of God and of the Lamb. We cannot rest till we see Him who is the object of our heart's joy. Our place here is to be rejected with Christ, to suffer for Him and with Him, knowing that we have infinitely better in Christ; and in a little while it will be seen that it is so. But the world is already judged, and is only waiting the execution of the sentence. Men are labouring busily to set this poor doomed world in order, but it is labouring in the very fire for vanity; for that setting in order is reserved for Jesus to accomplish by His personal appearing: for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet, and then the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Christians, too, may most perseveringly try to evangelize the world, in order to bring in a spiritual millennium, and court the world's help in furthering their endeavours, but it only produces confusion — Babylon the Great, which is so soon to have the heavy judgment of God. The truth is, that the Church of God is perfectly distinct from the world. No two things can be more opposite. Many try to harmonize them, but the Scripture declares that all that is not of the Father is of the world.

It is, then, the judgment of the mystery of the great whore which is here accompanied with such rejoicing in heaven; and in the scene different companies are brought before us. We have —

1. A great voice of much people in heaven, and their song is,

Hallelujah! the salvation, and the glory, and the might belong to our God, because true and just are His judgments; for He hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Hallelujah! {see Rev. 19:1-3}.

This ascription of praise and glory to God was the utterance of much people in heaven.

2. Then the four-and-twenty elders and four living creatures worship. They do not, as I judge, thus worship God on the ground of redemption, for we have not hitherto seen any proof of the latter being redeemed; but they fall down and worship God as ascribing praise and honor to Him for His judgment of this unchaste woman; they, worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying,

Amen; Hallelujah {Rev. 19:4}!

Thus the saints, who, as we have before seen, have been previously caught up to meet the Lord in the air (or, according to the 20th verse of the last chapter, the saints, and the apostles, and prophets), prostrate themselves before Him that sat on the throne, and, like all others in heaven, give praise and glory to God. This is the last time "the elders" are named in the Apocalypse; for

“the Bride,” the Lamb’s wife, now becomes distinctively owned.

3. A voice from the throne is then heard commanding all the servants to praise God; for although much people {Rev. 19:1}, elders {Rev. 19:4},

and

living creatures {see Rev. 19:4},

had rendered praise and worship, it seems as if there are other occupants of the heavenlies at this time who have not done so. Therefore the Seer tells us that

a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, ALL ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great (Rev. 19:5).

The consequence is, that —

4. A great multitude respond to this command with an outburst of loudest praise, as if all intelligences of heaven joined in one song of joy. It is such a crash of heavenly rejoicing, that it is compared to the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings. All, all in heaven unite in one loud

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth {Rev. 19:6}.

But let us not mistake the character of the praise. It is not that Christ reigns, but that

the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The Lord Jesus will come forth as the King of kings, and Lord of lords; but here it is God reigneth. Neither is it a song of praise for the triumphs of grace through the death and resurrection of Christ; but it is praise for the righteous vengeance of God upon Babylon, the mother of harlots. It is not, therefore,

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain {Rev. 5:12},

but,

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

What a difference this scene presents from the sorrow and trouble that many of the previous chapters have unfolded to us. This look into heaven is very happy and joyous. And I would here ask, Do not the opening verses of this chapter again plainly show that there are different companies in heaven? It seems to me impossible to identify the various visions of redeemed ones that are brought before us in this book. Who could reasonably regard the elders of the fifth chapter as identical with the great multitude of the seventh chapter, though both ascribe all their salvation to the blood of the Lamb? for not only do the elders ask the question, who they are, and whence they came, but we get all the particulars of the throne and those surrounding it in both chapters, and in the seventh the great multitude is an additional company. Look also at the fifteenth chapter. There you have a redeemed people in no wise corresponding with the elders of the fifth chapter, or the great multitude of the seventh chapter; for they stand on a sea of glass, which was unoccupied in the fourth chapter, and their song of Moses tells us of their having been on Jewish ground.

Again, the two witnesses that are seen in the eleventh chapter ascending up to heaven in a cloud in the sight of their enemies (Rev. 11:12), give a testimony that would be quite inconsistent for us who are members of the body of Christ, and called to suffer for Him, and to love our enemies as He did. (See Rev. 11:5.) And so in this nineteenth chapter, where the joy of heaven is opened to our spiritual intelligence, we have

much people, elders, and living creatures,

and

a great multitude,

saying,

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth {Rev. 19:6}.

Thus we see the joy of heaven when God takes matters into His own hand. Now it is man's day. Evil prospers. Christ is still rejected by most. The world lieth in the wicked one; Satan is still its prince. True it is that God exercises His restraining power, pours down His providential blessings, and publishes and uses, in His great mercy, the gospel of His grace. But when God interferes as claiming subjection, and holding man accountable for his course, after His various warnings and witnesses have been unheeded, of course it can only be in terrible judgment. Now, blessed be God, Divine mercy lingers, and His wondrous long-suffering patience is lengthened out;

grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life {see Rom. 5:21}.

Therefore, it would be quite out of character to say now, in a dispensational sense, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

We who have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, know that we stand in grace before Him, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, we look forward to the time when God will take the things of earth into His own hand, and send Jesus to put all enemies under His feet.

There seems to be a fitting propriety in God judging the false woman before the marriage of the Lamb, and His coming forth in glory; for when He is manifested His Church will be with Him.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

Thus God justifies the title of those who rest on the blood of His Son, puts honors on Him who alone is worthy, and condemns those who have despised the gospel of His grace, and trodden under foot the blood of atonement.

The pretender — the unchaste one who used the name of Christ for selfish purposes, and loved Him not — being judicially set aside as the object of God's eternal indignation, the Lamb's wife is now for the first time introduced. She is the object of God's wondrous grace, and for ever united to the Lamb as partaker of His changeless love; and sharer of His honor and glory. Afterward she is manifested; for in the ages to come God will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7). We therefore find that the praise in heaven for the judgment of the great whore is immediately followed with shoutings of joy and gladness,

because

the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready {Rev. 19:7}.

Hitherto the saints had known the joy of being with Christ around the throne of God; but now the Church is to have her distinctive place, the wife is to be presented. The Lord had spoken of a certain king, who made a marriage for his son; and now the time is come, and we are told that

His wife hath made herself ready.

“By which,” said a much loved brother, now with the Lord, “I understand this, that the saints, or redeemed, have till now been in heaven, as children of the Father’s house, but that now they are embodied to shine together in the glories of the golden city as the Lamb’s wife (Rev. 21:9). He has now presented to Himself a glorious Church (Eph. 5). The saints are now ready to be manifested in the Son’s kingdom, as they had till now been hidden in the Father’s house.”

There is reason to believe that the bema, or judgment-seat of Christ, of 2 Cor. 5:10, the place for manifesting saints and adjudicating rewards, will take place prior to this, because it seems as if Christ came forth in glory just after the marriage, and then we know we shall be manifested with Him. The next action after the marriage shows us the opened heaven, and the Lord’s glorious appearing. But however this may be, it is well to notice that we are here reminded that all our blessings are not of works, but the sovereign actings of Divine grace from first to last. Her spotless beauty is a gift. Her fitness for the glory is all through rich mercy.

To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright [margin]: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints: (Rev. 19:8).

Thus all is to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. This the saint well knows, and therefore delights to sing, —

“When I stand before Thy throne,
Dressed in beauty not mine own;
When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinching heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know —
Not till then — how much I owe.”

But this is not all. There are those who are called or bidden to the marriage, and they are blessed.

Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

Who can these be? Are they not guests? They seem very joyous, as if the marriage of the Lamb were connected with blessings to others; for they say,

Let us rejoice {see Rev. 19:7}.

But it is not they who speak of those who are called to the marriage, but another — the angel perhaps who showed him these things. John says,

HE saith to me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And to this is added,

These are the true sayings of God {Rev. 19:9}.

Now, as we have judged in our meditations on this wondrous book that the elders represent the heavenly saints — all that are caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming — and that in this 19th chapter those who compose the body, the Church, have their special place as the Lamb's wife, we can easily understand that there would be others there who might be guests at the marriage supper. They may, like John, be those who rejoice greatly, because of the Bridegroom's voice, and be friends of the Bridegroom rather than be the Bride. The Baptist said,

He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled (John 3:29).

We should expect also from other Scriptures that the Church of the firstborn would be distinguished from other individual saints who lived prior to the formation of "the body." For instance, in Hebrews 11, after the apostle had recounted the blessed actings of many a true believer from Abel downwards, he tells us two things:

1st. That God has provided some better thing for us; and 2nd. That those who lived before us could not get into their state of perfection until we enter upon ours:

that they without us should not be made perfect {Heb. 11:40}.

In Hebrews 12, the apostle mentions more than one class of redeemed ones. Besides "the Church," we have

just men.

We are spoken of as come

to the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. 12:23).

It is remarkable that John should now fall down to worship the angel who had showed him these things; whether he thought it was Christ Himself, or he was overcome with the joy and the gladness, glory and brightness of the scene which he had been contemplating, we are not told; but the angel quickly forbids his idolatry, and assures him that he is but a servant, and that God is the true object of worship.

See thou do it not. I am thy fellowservant, and [a fellowservant] of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God {Rev. 19:10}.

He does not say that he is a saint, but that, like the saints, he too is a servant of God.

The testimony of Jesus, that is, the testimony which proceeds from Jesus, whether through me, or you, or the prophet, is the spirit of prophecy, or, as others read it,

the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

This chapter is full of contrasts. Here are two women, two suppers, two armies, and two kings. The great whore stands in contrast with the Lamb's wife, the supper of the great God with the marriage supper of the Lamb, the armies of heaven with the armies of the beast, and the beasts and kings of the earth with the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

John sees heaven opened. He had seen a door opened in heaven in the fourth chapter, and heard a voice calling him up to witness things in connection with the throne of God; but now the heaven is opened for the full display of the glory and power of the Lord Himself, and His hosts, in judgment upon living persons. The wrath of the Lamb is now really come. Every eye beholds Him coming in the clouds of heaven, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth wail because of Him. The period of God's dealing with the nations by providential judgments, and special outpourings of His wrath, brought no repentance, but called forth more thorough blasphemy and daring impiety; it is time, therefore, that Christ, the Lord of all, should assert His rights as Heir of all things, and the rightful Head of all principality and power, and that He should have those who have suffered with Him and for Him — His joint-heirs — with Him. The Lord is thus symbolized as sitting upon a white horse, the emblem of power in the earth, in the attitude of taking vengeance, and putting all enemies under His feet. It is a deep reality, and very, very awful. What solemnity of soul we should have when we give utterance to such lines as —

“Lo, He comes! from heaven descending,

Once for favoured sinners slain;

Thousand thousand saints attending,

Swell the triumph of His train!

Hallelujah!

Jesus comes, and comes to reign.”

He is not now seen with visage marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; not now emptying Himself, and making Himself of no reputation; not now to be spit upon, or made sin and a curse for us, in being nailed to a tree; not now seen in ignominy, poverty, weakness, and desertion; but manifesting His own glory and power, asserting His own rights. As another has said, “He is here seen putting on all the glories He has acquired, and all the honors befitting such an occasion.”

As to His titles, we may notice first of all that He is called

FAITHFUL AND TRUE {Rev. 19:11};

for He proved Himself emphatically to be the faithful witness, always doing those things which pleased God, and always faithful to man. He never failed. He alone could say,

I am the truth {John 14:6};

for He only was ever true to God, and true to all else. No other witness on earth than Jesus could be deservedly called

Faithful and True.

He was faithful and true in humiliation; He is now faithful and true as a great High Priest in heaven; and — oh, how solemn! — He will be faithful and true in judging the world in righteousness.

We find, too, that

He had A NAME WRITTEN WHICH NO MAN KNEW BUT HE HIMSELF {Rev. 19:12}.

What mortal could ever know the name of Him who was God manifested in the flesh? Who can conceive the name of Him whose love passeth knowledge? How can we, then, venture to express ourselves on that which we are told no man knows? But of this we are assured, that He was glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; that it was given Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, and to be Head of all principality and power; also, that all judgment is committed unto Him, because He is the Son of man. The children of Israel had to carry certain parts of the tabernacle which they dared not uncover; and we will not attempt to unravel what God has not revealed. Perhaps it is the most fruitful source of deadly error. It should be enough for us to be told, that

no man knoweth the Son, but the, Father (Matt. 11:27).

This mystery seems to refer to the divinity of Him who is thus brought before us, who had a name written which no man knew but He Himself.

We are told also that His name is called

THE WORD OF GOD {Rev. 19:13}.

He is the embodiment of the written word. He could say,

Thy law is within my heart {Psa. 40:8}.

It is He who was in the beginning, that was with God and was God, by whom all things were made. The Word was made flesh, whose glory John beheld — the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. It shows us His divine, eternal character, and His fitness for carrying out the purposes set forth in the Word of God.

He also bears

on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS {Rev. 19:16};

for He will be manifested as the only Potentate, to whom all powers, dominions, and authorities must be subject. Now His Lordship is denied; but then every knee must bow. Still the world's cry is,

We have no king but Cæsar {John 19:15};

but then it will be seen that all power is given unto Him, and that His dominion is universal and everlasting. In the judgment which ushers in His kingdom, as well as during His millennial reign, He will show that faithfulness, and truth, and universal supremacy belong to Him.

The Lord's aspect is one of judgment — strict, righteous indignation according to the word of God. He will not then preach, pardon and salvation, and go into every city and village preaching and

showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God as He once did, but, as we are solemnly reminded, in righteousness He doth judge and make war {Rev. 19:11}.

Alas! who can stand when the Lord marks iniquity? Who can meet His angry frown? Who can escape His flaming eye? No creature can avoid His searching; nothing can be covered from His sight.

On His head were many crowns (diadems), (Rev. 19:12).

The stupendous work that He accomplished on the tree witnesses that He is worthy of all honor, and glory, might, majesty, and dominion. Man has failed in every responsibility, and corrupted everything with which he has been entrusted; but Jesus obeyed and honored God in every circumstance, and could truly say to His Father,

I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do {John 17:4}.

He shall yet then wear His many crowns, and all shall pay homage to Him. As King of Israel, King of nations, King over all the earth, King of kings, His worth and supremacy shall be manifested and acknowledged. While we anticipate this glorious display of Him who was once mocked with a crown of thorns, we can heartily unite with another in singing —

“Our longing eyes would fain behold

That bright and blessed brow,

Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear

Its crowns of glory now.”

He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood (Rev. 19:13)

tells us of His treading the winepress of the wrath of God. How different is this scene to that of His being nailed to the tree, when all forsook Him, and He poured out His soul unto death; when He shed His blood for many, for the remission of sins. When He is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, His vengeance must fall on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel. The two-edged sword of His mouth must rebuke the nations, and His fiery indignation devour the adversaries.

The Lord will not be alone when He comes to exercise judicial power. We are told, that when He comes out of heaven,

the armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses {Rev. 19:14}.

This we should have expected from the Scriptures —

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that ye, shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:2, 3).

But there are other reasons why we consider that the armies which follow Christ out of heaven are saints.

1. The Lord's promises.

He that overcometh, and keepeth my works to the end, to Him will I give power over the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken to shivers even as I received of my Father (Rev. 2:26, 27).

Again:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne (Rev. 3:21).

The vision we are considering describes this very scene; for we are told that the Lord will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron. (Rev. 19:15). It is the same scene, too, that is contemplated in the second Psalm, in connection with Christ as King in Zion, where Jehovah says,

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:8, 9).

From these Scriptures we expect the saints to be with Christ when

He comes to judge.

2. It is positively stated, that

when Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

3. The armies which follow Christ out of heaven not only reign with Him in power and glory, as symbolized by their being on white horses, but are clothed in fine linen, white and clean, which in the eighth verse is said to be

the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:8).

4. But if any doubt should remain on the mind, we find in Rev. 17:14, where the same scene is alluded to, that those who are with the Lamb,

the Lord of lords, and King of kings,

are

called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

No one, I suppose, would doubt that the words, "called," "chosen," and "faithful" must apply to saints. We never read of angels as "called," though we doubt not that "mighty angels" will accompany the Lord on certain occasions. Whenever the circumstances are connected with formal judgment, then we have angels (Matt. 25:31). We know how often the word "called" is used in the epistles in reference to saints, and sometimes "chosen" and "faithful" also.

The supper of the great God {Rev. 19:17},

or, as most critics prefer, the great supper of God, is then brought before us. The fowls seem summoned in readiness to feed upon the carcass as soon as the people are slain. An angel stands in the sun, the most central place for summoning the visitants of this great supper. It is very, appalling.

He cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great (Rev. 19:17, 18).

What a supper! How wide the contrast with the marriage supper of the Lamb! The prophet Ezekiel refers to it; and it is interesting to observe that, like other prophets, he shows us that Israel's blessing on the earth is preceded by judgment. He first tells us that the feathered fowl and beast of the field shall eat the flesh and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, and then adds,

I will set my glory among the heathen, . . . and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel . . . neither will I hide my face from them any more (Ezek. 39:17-29).

Our chapter then speaks of the great battle of Armageddon referred to before. The apostasy and wickedness of man have now culminated to the highest pitch of daring outrage against Christ. This is where the present denial of the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, will lead men. The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, are confederated together to make war against the Lamb, and against His army. The result is as we might expect; the Lord consumes the wicked one with

the spirit of His mouth, and destroys him with the brightness of His coming {see 2 Thess. 2:8}.

The beast, and the false prophet who wrought miracles before him, fall under special judgment, and it is executed at once; both are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, so that they are there a thousand years before Satan. The remainder, that is, the kings of the earth and their armies, fall under the vengeance of the Lord — they are slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse; then the great supper of God takes place, when all the fowls are filled with their flesh. This is a judgment of the Lord Jesus on living persons; their bodies will be raised again, with others who have died in their sins, at the close of the millennium. The treading of the winepress may be the judgment of false professors. It is referred to in Rev. 14:18-20. But the judgment of the beast and false prophet seems not only summary, but final. It is not the judgment of the sheep and the goats of Matt. 25, which is one on living nations at the commencement of the millennium.

Thus we have seen the whole system of Babylon, the beast and false prophet, the kings in league with him, and their armies, judicially set aside; the next chapter shows us the binding of Satan, the reign of Christ, the first resurrection, and eventually the final judgment of Satan and the wicked dead.

How little do men think where they are rushing! What madness to pursue the course of this world, which ere long will have such a termination! How immense is the difference of being with Christ and against Him! Events are rapidly rolling on towards this awful crisis. Time flies, oh, how swiftly, and with what amazing speed circumstances are culminating towards this terrible climax! What spiritual mind can fail to perceive the present practical denial of the Lordship of Jesus, the wide-spread spirit of insubordination, the ready way which men have of accounting for almost everything, as if there were no God, the popularity of the confederating principle, the almost universal effort to exalt man, the rapid increase of Christless religion, and all, too, connected with vast worldly prosperity and advancement! Thus the eyes of many are blinded to the precipice they are eagerly rushing over, and souls are insensible to the fiery indignation and vengeance so soon

coming. Blessed are they who have to do with Christ Himself, who know what it is to commit the keeping of their souls to Him who died on the Cross to save sinners, but is now on the right hand of God. We cannot too often testify to those around us that the Savior of sinners is a person — the Son of God;

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

“Thou precious Lamb of God,

We do believe Thy love;

We rest upon Thy word,

And hope to reign above

In realms of never-ending bliss —

With Thee, our perfect righteousness.”

Satan, who had been thrust out of heavenly places in the 12th chapter, and who had come down and given his mighty energy to the beast and false prophet, is now chained and imprisoned in the abyss for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:1, 2). An angel is the instrument used. John says,

I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed for a little season {Rev. 20:1-3}.

Satan will be then under restraint for a time, and what an immense difference this will make to the world. Now he is mighty in power. He is called the Dragon, because of his terrible power: Satan, because he is man's adversary: Devil, because he is the great accuser: and old Serpent, because he had been the seducer from the beginning. His power is very great, so that he is called the prince of this world, and is said to be going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is called the god of this world, and as such blinds the eyes of the children of men, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of God should shine unto them. He sows tares where the Lord's good seed springs up, and thus makes false professors. He is the accuser of the brethren, and deceiver of the whole world, the father of lies — a liar and murderer from the beginning. He tempts the children of God, seeks to hinder their communion with the Father and the Son, and with one another, and endeavours to seduce from the simplicity of Christ; and to accomplish his purposes, transforms himself and his servants into angels of light. He is still the prince of the power of the air, has access into heavenly places, tries to hinder believers from coming to the mercy-seat by the blood of Jesus, and works in the children of disobedience.

These terrible ways of Satan are to be stopped, and this earth, prior to the eternal state, is to know the peaceful effect of the absence of this great enemy, and the presence and reign of Christ. All Christians are agreed that this time of universal blessedness will take place, but many are looking for its introduction by the gradual spread of the gospel, instead of by the Lord's judicial

interference, taking out of His kingdom them that offend and do iniquity, and leaving a people on the earth for blessing. It need scarcely be noticed how important it is to gather from the Scriptures the Lord's mind on the subject, and how much it must necessarily affect our walk and service. If the Lord's coming be our true scriptural hope, and that the object of the gospel is not to convert the world, but to gather out an elect people both of Jews and Gentiles, until the

one new man {Eph. 2:15}

is complete, and those who are Christ's at His coming are caught up to meet Him in the air, how detached from the world, and how much in heaven must the soul be, that has this blessed hope in real exercise and power!

He that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure {see 1 John 3:3}.

Thus the binding of Satan, and judgment of the living wicked, which we have been considering, usher in "the day of the Lord." Other parts of Scripture show there will be other judgments also at the Lord's appearing. In fact judgment, and terrible vengeance characterize it, though mercy accompanies it. The Old Testament Scriptures abound with prophetic announcements of "the day of the Lord"; but the coming of the Lord Jesus to receive us unto Himself — to be caught up to meet him in the air, is a New Testament revelation.

By the word of the Lord {1 Thess. 4:15}

and

Behold, I shew you a mystery {1 Cor. 15:51},

tell us this. In the day of the Lord many events will take place, and some widely differing from each other.

The day of the Lord has got its morning, midday, and evening. The fearful judgments we have been considering occur in the morning. This is followed by the reign of peace. The Lord will then fulfil His promises to Israel, of arising upon them as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings, and will number up His jewels, the remnant of the Jews that have been serving Him in a day of such fiery persecution. Israel shall then know Him whom they pierced to be their Savior and Deliverer; they shall be all taught of God, all righteous, a nation born at once, and shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the whole earth with fruit. Creation, too, shall be delivered from its present bondage of corruption, and universal homage shall be paid to Jesus the Lord; for as we saw in the fifth chapter, every creature in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, will be saying,

Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever {Rev. 5:13};

or, according to the last Psalm, when everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord. Thus shall the day of the Lord have its meridian glory and brightness. We can scarcely conceive the immense results of Satan's being bound, and of Christ's presence, power, and glory. But immense as they will be, the dispensation will still be marked with imperfection. Sin will be there, though kept down by the rod of Christ's power. The marks of sin and curse will be there too, for

dust shall be the serpent's meat {Isa. 65:25}.

The perfect eternal condition will not take place till after the millennium. Yet the blessing will be very wonderful, for Christ shall be King over the whole earth. Satan will be bound, and the rule will be perfect: thus two evils fraught with misery to our race will be taken away: but man's heart will not be thoroughly subjected to Christ, thus there will be room for the temptation of Satan when he is let loose again. The Church, though associated with Christ in His reign and kingdom, is, properly speaking, always regarded as belonging to the heavenlies.

"Oh what a bright and blessed world

This groaning earth of ours shall be,

When from His throne the tempter hurled,

Shall leave it all, O Lord, to Thee.

"Come, Savior, then, o'er all below

Shine brightly from Thy throne above;

Bid heaven and earth Thy glory know,

And all creation feel Thy love.

"But brighter far that world above,

Where we as we are known shall know;

And, to the sweet embrace of love,

Reign o'er this ransomed earth below.

"O blessed Lord, with longing eyes

That blissful hour we long to see;

While every worm and leaf supplies

Proof of the curse, and calls for Thee."

But, alas! there are the dark shades of evening belonging to this day. Satan will be let loose, and many will be again deceived; and such bold rebellion against God will be manifested by man as shall bring down fiery wrath from heaven. Lastly, the wicked dead, and Satan, will receive their final sentence.

The effect of Satan's being loosed for a little season proves again the utterly bad condition of man, and that nothing short of being born again of God's Spirit can fit him for the enjoyment of God. Here are myriads of human beings, countless as the sand upon the sea shore, who have long known the Lord's rule and presence as King over all the earth, have outwardly enjoyed the blessedness of His reign, have beheld the pleasantness and wisdom of His ways, the brightness of His glory, and the peace of His government; but no sooner is temptation presented by Satan, than men hearken to his lie, and turn against God and His people. The "nations" which will then be on earth will welcome the devourer's falsehood, refuse the truth of God, and go up against the camp of "the saints," and the beloved city; but God's fiery judgment from heaven will quickly

devour them. This shows us what man is. Man had been tried in the presence of Christ in humiliation, and then he will be tried after having known the personal reign and glory of Christ, and will be again proved to be thoroughly bad. Like every other test, it shows that

the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so that they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:7, 8}.

And that

except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God {John 3:5}.

The test again reminds us that nothing can endure that is not based on the blood of the Lamb, and that the blood is the foundation and security of all blessing, and the spring of all our joy and worship. How precious this should make Jesus to us!

“Thy name we bless, Lord Jesus

Thy name all names excelling;

How great Thy love,

All praise above,

Should every tongue be telling.

“Thy Father’s loving-kindness

In giving Thee was shown us:

Now by Thy blood

Redeemed to God,

As children He doth own us.”

Now let us turn to the more pleasant part of this vision. John saw thrones, and many who lived (or came to life), and they reigned with Christ. The reign extends over a thousand years. The first resurrection is defined. It is the only part of Scripture wherein the words

first resurrection {Rev. 20:5, 6}

are found. It is therefore very important that we should understand it. There are three companies of persons here included in the definition of first resurrection.

They are clustered together in the fourth verse. John says: —

1. I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them {Rev. 20:4}.

These seem to me to be the saints that had been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming. This view is supported by the fact, that the only redeemed company sitting on thrones in the Revelation are the heavenly saints symbolized by the four and twenty elders.

2. John saw

the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God {Rev. 20:4}.

Now, I ask, can this company be any other than that described on the opening of the fifth seal? There we had

souls under the altar {see Rev. 6:9}

who were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. They are evidently those of the Jewish remnant who go forth with the gospel of the kingdom, after the Church is gone, and in the first half of the week before the Man of Sin is fully developed.

3. John saw others: the next clause may be read,

And such as had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived [that is, lived again in resurrection] and reigned with Christ a thousand years {see Rev. 20:4}.

In this last company we have those in Rev. 13:15, who were put to death after the rising up of the beast, that is, after the midst of the week of Dan. 9:27, because they would not worship the image of the beast. Observe that each of these companies has previously been brought before us in the Apocalypse, that they follow in chronological order, and that one is off the scene before the other that follows is brought into existence. For instance, the first company on thrones are in heaven before those represented by the souls under the altar are put to death; and it is after these are slain that the abomination of desolation is set up, and consequently many martyred for not worshiping the beast. Again, it is very important to notice that all these companies are said to be the first resurrection.

After a short parenthetical sentence, we are plainly told

this is the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5}.

Here, then, we have a Scripture definition, and nothing can be more necessary, in seeking to understand the word of God, than accepting Scripture definitions. Many mistakes occur for lack of this. There is another remarkable definition in Ephesians 1. We are there told what the Church is; it is said to be

the body {Eph. 1:22, 23}

of Him who is ascended far above all heavens. We need not question, then, what the Church is, nor what the first resurrection is — both are defined. Neither must we confound the two; for the first resurrection comprehends, as we have seen, more than the Church. The first resurrection is distributive. At the close of the reign of Christ, others will live again, or rise from the dead; for all that are in the graves must hear the voice of Jesus, and come forth; but the resurrection of damnation, as it is called, will not take place till the thousand years are completed.

The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years are finished (see Rev. 20:5).

But that there might be no question as to the eternal happiness and blessing of those who live and reign with Christ a thousand years, we are further told that those who have part in the first

resurrection are blessed and holy {Rev. 20:6}; the second death, the lake of fire, which will operate eternally on the lost, hath no power over them; and not only have they the negative mercy of the everlasting deliverance from that, but the positive blessing of happy relationship to God — they shall be priests of God and of Christ (Rev. 20:6). The devil receives his final judgment at the close of the thousand years. We are told that the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

Our destiny, then, is to be

for ever with the Lord {see 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:17};

as Jesus said,

Where I am, there shall also my servant be {John 12:26}.

Our place now is one of suffering with and for Him — sympathy with a rejected Christ. To have fellowship with Him in suffering now, and fellowship with Him in glory by-and-by, properly belong to us who are members of His body. We should, then, be always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long”;

for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

“And though there intervene

Rough seas and stormy skies,

Faith will not suffer aught to screen

Thy glory from mine eyes.

“There shall all clouds depart,

The wilderness shall cease;

And sweetly shall each gladdened heart

Enjoy eternal peace.”

Nothing can be more plainly set forth than the difference between

the first resurrection

and the resurrection of

the rest of the dead {Rev. 20:5}

described in this chapter. The period of a thousand years intervenes between them. Those in the one live again and reign with Christ; the others rise not till the thousand years are completed, and are then judged

every man according to their works {Rev. 20:13};

so that every one who is not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire. We must remember that death is never presented to us in Scripture as annihilation; for not only do men live again, body and soul, after the first death, but those who will be in the second death are described as tormented day and night for ages of ages. There is that existing principle in man which renders him capable of receiving

everlasting punishment {Matt. 25:46}.

Hence, we read not only of God being able to destroy both body and soul in hell, but oh, how solemn! that process of punishment is described as an

everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power {2 Thess. 1:9}.

The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal {2 Cor. 4:18}.

And we may be assured that our Lord would not have mentioned five times, within the compass of a few verses, the dreadful miseries of hell-fire as the fire that never shall be quenched, and where their worm dieth not, if He had intended us to understand that death is annihilation, and that the punishment of sinners will be limited and temporal. (See Mark 9:43-48.)

Does not our Lord here, in speaking of the Gehenna, or hell-fire, refer to the valley of Hinnom, where the people burnt their children alive? It is called also the valley of Tophet, from the fire-stove in which the children were burnt. This valley was the scene of those wicked sacrifices; and after Josiah's time it is commonly believed that the valley of Hinnom (Geennan, Greek) continued to be the place of abominable filthiness and pollution, where offal and carcasses and filthiness were burnt by fire, and worms were seen preying upon the unconsumed pieces. Is there not a contrast drawn by our Lord between these fires which are quenched, and the worms which have died, and the eternal condition

where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched (Josh. 18:16; 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3; Jer. 7:31, 32; 19:5, 6; 32:35). (See Parkhurst's Lexicon.)

It is worthy of remark, that the same word is used by our Lord, in Matt. 25, for "everlasting life," and "everlasting punishment," as is used for the King eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise God. (1 Tim. 1:17). Note also, that this word translated "punishment," is necessarily translated "torment" in 1 John 4:18, for

fear hath torment.

Happy those who, in child-like simplicity, consent to wholesome words, even to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should not forget that man, at creation, was distinguished from every other being which God fashioned, not only in being made after the image of God, but also in receiving the breath of life, and thus he became emphatically a living being. We read that

the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground;

and it is added, that

God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7).

This distinguishes man from every other creature.

Nor can we find a single passage in Scripture which speaks of one general resurrection. We hesitate not to say, that the idea is entirely opposed to the word of God. The parable of the sheep and the goats, in Matt. 25, which is so often referred to in proof of it, if carefully examined, will not be found to contain any idea of resurrection at all. There is not a person there said to be raised from the dead. It is a judgment of

nations {Matt. 25:32}

on the earth by the Lord, when He sits on His throne as King, in relation to the testimony of "the gospel of the kingdom," which will yet go forth by a remnant of Jews. There are, therefore, not only sheep and goats, but a third party, the King's

brethren {Matt. 25:40}.

The parable of the wheat and tares, and also of the good fish and bad, in Matt. 13, are also without any reference to the resurrection either of believers or of unbelievers. It is Christ, when He is revealed from heaven (though angels are occupied in the work), clearing the living wicked out of His kingdom by executing judgment upon them: severing the wicked from among the just, and establishing His kingdom in the earth. The prophet Malachi, in speaking of this time says, that He shall tread down the wicked, and arise as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings, unto those who fear His name (Mal. 4:1-3). The people of Israel always get into their blessings through judgment.

The only passage I know, that appears to give the least colour to the thought of one general resurrection, is that found in the 12th chapter of Daniel.

At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, etc. (Dan. 12:1, 2).

But here note, —

1. That it is Daniel's people, the Jews, to which this prophecy refers:

Thy people {Dan. 12:1}

and

many of them {Dan. 12:1}.

2. That it is connected with the great "tribulation" — the

time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation (Dan. 12:1)

— which we know from 2 Thess. 2, Rev. 19, and other Scriptures, will precede the millennium; whereas the chapter before us positively states that the resurrection of

the dead, small and great {Rev. 20:12},

is not till after the reign of a thousand years.

3. We have been delivered from the wrath to come long ago by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; but Daniel's people have not yet been delivered. Christ will close the great tribulation by coming as their Deliverer, and judging the wicked —

Thy people shall be delivered {Dan. 12:1}. (See also Rom. 11:26.)

This passage in Daniel may not refer to the literal resurrection of the body at all; but if it did, the scene occurring before the millennium, cannot refer to the judgment of the great white throne, which is after the millennium. It is most probably a political resurrection of many of the Jewish people hidden among the nations. They will have a new existence, and in that state some will awake to everlasting life, and some to shame. Isaiah seems to refer to the resuscitation of Israel in language something like the prophet Daniel. He says,

Thy dead shall live: my dead body [or carcass, that is, Israel in her spiritual deadness, called by Jehovah "my dead body,"] shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead (Isa. 26:19).

To show that it is connected with a time of vengeance on others, the prophet adds,

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity [Are not these the living wicked?]: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain (Isa. 26:20, 21).

Ezekiel speaks of the future resurrection and restoration of Israel in the well-known vision of dry bones (Ezek. 37:12).

But suppose we could not answer every question that may be proposed in favour of one general resurrection, we have positive teaching in Scripture of the reverse, and it is always happy to get upon the ground of positive and revealed truth.

1. Our Lord Himself spoke of

the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).

as the time of reward to His disciples.

2. He spoke of some being accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection from the dead (Luke 20:35). Mark,

from the dead

— from among the dead ones. The idea of resurrection of the dead was not a difficulty with our Lord's disciples; but when our Lord spoke of rising from the dead, they questioned one another what the rising from the dead should mean (Mark 9:9, 10). Our Lord's was a resurrection from the dead. The prescribed order of resurrection is, first,

Christ the firstfruits;

next,

they that are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23};

then cometh the end, etc.

3. Jesus also spoke of a resurrection of life, and a resurrection of judgment (John 5:29).

4. The apostle Paul sets the truth of the resurrection of those in Christ before the sorrowing Thessalonian believers for their comfort (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

5. In this twentieth of Revelation we have,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection {Rev. 20:6},

and the resurrection of the dead, small and great, not till a thousand years afterwards.

We might make other quotations in proof of the different orders of resurrection, but enough, we trust, has been produced to refute the popular thought of there being only one general resurrection. It is the resurrection of damnation, or judgment, that we are now about to consider, which, if I mistake not, consists of those only who have died without Christ. Jesus said,

He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [or judgment] (John 5:24).

Those, therefore, who are in the resurrection of damnation or judgment, are not only persons who have actually died, but who are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

At the close of the millennium, the present earth and heaven flee away before the great White Throne, and Him that sat on it. This is an important point, because it proves that the Lord coming in the clouds of heaven, when every eye shall see Him, when Israel, and all the tribes of the earth, will mourn because of Him, cannot be at this time, but must be pre-millennial, because Israel's restoration and the earth's blessing follow the judgments then executed upon the living. The time we are contemplating, of the great White Throne, seems connected with the created heaven and earth passing away, as if it were to make room for this great Throne and great judgment. Not a word, therefore, is here put forth about the Lord's coming, but about One sitting upon a great White Throne. It is not the throne of grace which we now know, nor the throne of peace which the millennial glory will know, but it is the throne of final and eternal judgment; and although myriads may be brought before it, there shall not be a single case that will not have its special investigation; for we are told that John saw in the vision, that

they were judged every man, according to their works {Rev. 20:13}.

The throne is described as “white” to show its infinite holiness and unsullied purity; and the awful extent and eternal importance of the business it will transact are enough to show why it is called “great.” The class judged are

the dead, small and great {Rev. 20:12},

and the character of the judgment is according to their works. The Lord Jesus is, doubtless, the Judge; for while we know that God is Judge of all, we are further told that the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. From His face the heaven and the earth flee away. His Church will not be before the throne to be judged; for she has already been reigning with Christ a thousand years, and the judgment of her sin and guilt the Savior bore for her in matchless grace upon the cross. This judgment will be but a continuance of the regal power and authority of Christ; for He will reign till He hath put down all authority and power; and the last enemy which shall be destroyed is death. We expect, therefore, to be associated with Christ, sitting on His throne with Him in this concluding part of His reign and execution of His mighty power (see I Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21); It is, I say, a judgment of men according to works — a final judgment of sinners. They had died Christless, and now they must render an account to Him who is able to judge righteously. And who can stand such a process?

If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand {Psa. 130:3}?

The hidden things are now made manifest, and the secrets of men's hearts judged by Him from whom no secrets are hid.

The small and great stand before God {Rev. 20:12}.

Wherever their bodies had been, they can be detained no longer. The sea, which has long swallowed up in its liquid grave multitudes of the human family, is made to give up every one of its dead. Death — whether the corrupted elements of its many victims lie either in the trackless desert, the Alpine snows, the pathless forest, the unfrequented valley, or elsewhere — is made to deliver up each one of Adam's family that its chilly hand had seized. And Hades, — the place of departed spirits, too, must now own that Jesus is the only Potentate and Lord of the dead as well as of the living, and yield up every soul of man. There can be no possibility of escape. Almighty power commands; the omniscient eye of God sees that not one is wanting. He, from whose presence none can flee, and no place exclude His search, ranges all the dead, small and great, from Cain down to the last link in the chain of sinners, before Himself. Those who once despised Jesus, and set at nought the glorious testimony to the priceless value of His all-cleansing blood, now see Him with His wounded hands and feet as their Judge. Those who prided themselves on their own imaginary goodness, and sought to cover their nakedness with the fig-leaf apron of self-righteousness, now find its thorough failure to hide the leprous spots of a foul and fallen nature before the Lord. Ah! who can stand before God to be judged according to his works? What can satisfy God's eye, but that which is based on the sin- atoning efficacy of the precious blood of Christ?

The character of the judgment is detailed, and so just and pure and perfect will it be, that not a soul shall be ever able to complain; every conscience shall be so convicted, and every case so thoroughly weighed in the balance of truth and justice, that all shall be speechless, and hang down their heads in unutterable remorse and despair at the just sentence of the Judge, which shall

silence every tongue, and bring everlasting glory to the power and faithfulness of God.

The books were opened {Rev. 20:12}.

This is more than one book — what books can they be? We read of a book of remembrance. What could this be for, but to convict those standing at the bar of Divine justice? for God needs not to be reminded of anything — all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him. A man will then read at a glance the whole history of himself. God will set his sins in order before his eyes; his secret sins in the light of his countenance. It will be a dark, black catalogue, without one good thing to shed a ray of brightness on the dismal page; for

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

The Bible will doubtless be “opened” too, as another witness; for, according to the Scripture, in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established {Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1}.

The Savior said,

The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

Those who knew nothing of the stern requirements of the law, or the shadowy testimony of oft-repeated ritualism and sacrifice, will find that

as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law (Rom. 2:12);

and that the laws of nature, and the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are so clearly seen, and the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator understood, that they are without excuse; and it shall be proved that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, etc., and

changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 1:25).

Others will be there who had long, more or less, boasted that they were Moses' disciples, but were lawbreakers; and it is written, that

as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (Rom. 2:12);

this is another Bible testimony. And who can possibly escape the condemnation of this witness, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ? for

by the law is the knowledge of sin {Rom. 3:20}.

Instead of the law of Moses giving any shelter to a Christless soul, it has always been the ministration of condemnation and death.

Now we know,

says the apostle Paul,

that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law

there shall no flesh be justified in His sight (Rom. 3:19, 20).

Again, we are told, that

as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse (Gal. 3:10).

What madness and folly it is for men to take refuge in law-keeping, or any deeds of the flesh, for justification before God! The very thing that many are vainly hoping in, as giving them superiority over some of their neighbors, is that which justly proves their guilt and condemnation; in fact, the religion to which they so tenaciously cling is the death-warrant of their eternal perdition. But others will be there who have called themselves Christians, or at least have come under the gospel's joyful sound. The Bible is a witness to them. Its many warning voices against a name to live while being spiritually dead, the judgments threatened on mere professors, or those who had no love of the truth, and obeyed not the gospel; the Savior's oft-repeated testimony against Pharisaic hypocrisy; the sound of alarm against "tares," "foolish virgins," and all others who received not that blessed Savior, who is alone the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the oft-repeated testimony of the inspired page, of the impossibility of the unrighteous entering into the kingdom of heaven; and of any escaping who neglect so great salvation; and such terrible declarations as,

He that hath not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him {see John 3:36},
and

He that believeth not shall be damned {Mark 16:16};

most justly settle the eternal doom of those who acknowledge but obey not the Holy Scripture.

But there will be another book opened —

the book of life {Rev. 20:12}

— another swift and solemn witness against the Christless part of the human race. It seems opened to show that their names are not there. It is a balance by which they are weighed, and found wanting {Dan. 5:27}.

It is the book of Divine sovereign grace, in which they had no interest. It is a final test: for whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

Though great and small are in this judgment, the fact of each being judged according to their works prohibits the thought of infants being here. In time of old, Jehovah said by Moses,

Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. (Deut. 1: 39).

But further. Death and Hades must be dealt with judicially too. Some one has said that "Heaven and earth will pass away but to be revived; but Death and Hades never." Christ has power over death; and after Satan is cast into the lake of fire, death has to be judged, but of course after the wicked dead are raised. Then Christ asserts His rights, and Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire, so that after this there will be no more death.

Can any triumph be more mighty in its operations, or more complete in its accomplishment? It is Christ subduing all things unto Himself. All must acknowledge that He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. He is Lord of all.

This is followed by the eternal state. We may read the first eight verses of the twenty-first chapter as completing the section which commenced with the judgment of the great whore in the nineteenth chapter. The order is the same as we find in 1 Cor.15, which tells us that

Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; for He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him; and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that did put all things under Him, that God may be all in all {see 1 Cor. 15:25-28}.

Here we find in the Revelation, that the casting of Hades and Death into the lake of fire concludes the subjection of everything by the Lord unto Himself. The kingdom, therefore, must now be delivered up unto God, that God may be all in all.

The first heaven and earth having passed away, we have now a new heaven and a new earth. Peter tells us that the present heaven and earth are reserved unto fire, that the elements will melt with fervent heat, and that the earth and all things therein shall be burned up. He also tells us that this will take place in the day of the Lord. Other Scriptures show that it will be neither at the dawn nor the meridian of that day, but at the close of that day, or, as we have before seen, at the termination of the millennium. We further learn from the apostle Peter, that this eternal condition will be characterized by righteousness dwelling. Now, we have righteousness preached and imputed to them that believe, and righteousness suffers; in the millennium righteousness will reign —

in righteousness He doth judge and make war {Rev. 19:11};

but in the new heaven and new earth righteousness will dwell, for it is final and changeless in its character. John also informs us, that, after the destruction of the present heaven and earth there will be

no more sea {Rev. 21:1}.

In our present constitution, natural life could not be sustained on the earth without sea, and the broad ocean flowing between different countries often acts as a restraint upon man's evil passions, checking war and bloodshed. But then, sin and curse will no more be known.

John sees the holy city descending from God out of heaven. Though still prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, she is not presented in relation to the Lamb, as in the millennial state; for the kingdom is delivered up unto God. Still the bride is distinctive, as Ephesians tells us that it will be

throughout all ages (Eph. 3:21).

The Church may be the tabernacle in which God abides, manifesting His glory to us. We get no longer "nations," but "men"; for nations which owe their origin to sin, though they exist in the

millennium, are no longer known after the Lord has destroyed the works of the devil, and subdued all things unto Himself. But man, whom God created upright, in His own image, and placed in the earth — a creature with whom He could come down and hold converse, is, in the eternal state, to know God coming down to dwell with them:

For they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God (Rev. 21:3).

Death, as we have seen, being cast into the lake of fire, is taken away for ever; so that we are told, God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

It is quite clear that this is post-millennial, because in that dispensation we are told that a sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed, and the child shall die a hundred years old. (Isa. 65:20). This great change in the eternal state is accounted for in the next verse by a voice from the throne, saying,

Behold, I make all things new {Rev. 21:5}.

The seer is commanded to write that these words are true and faithful; and they come to us attested by Him who is the

Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End {Rev. 21:6}.

The description of this state concludes with two thoughts in widest contrast, but running side by side — namely, the eternal happiness of the saved, and the eternal misery of the lost. The former inherit all things, drink freely of the fountain of the water of life, and stand in love before God as His sons. The latter, consisting of the fearful and unbelieving, the abominable, etc., have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. 21:8). Thus, after the passing away of the present heaven and earth, and the judgment of the great White Throne, we are permitted to look at the saved in their eternal inheritance of full, unmingled blessing, and the eternal misery and torment of the wicked and unbelieving.

Moreover, let us not forget that the distinction is still preserved, as it has been all through Scripture, between the heaven and the earth.

The Church is always seen in connection with heaven. Her calling, standing, and eternal destiny are heavenly. She is made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ,

that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6, 7).

And she is seen here again, coming down from God out of heaven.

But Israel's calling, blessings, and destinies are earthly; and, as it seems, for ever. How, when the earth is being burned up, that people will be preserved, and brought into the new earth, I know not; but it appears that they will have a place in the new earth:

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain (Isa. 66:22).

The people of Israel and their name are, therefore, to be as enduring as the new heaven and earth. This is deeply interesting, and if in that perpetual state of blessing the land shall be specially marked out, and the place where our Lord was crucified had in everlasting remembrance, it is no more than we should expect, that an act so stupendous, and connected with such everlasting results, should be recognized in the new earth. Scripture seems to favour the thought; for God made covenant with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob by a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying,

Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan (Psa. 105:9-11);

and Isaiah says,

They shall inherit the land for ever (Isa. 60:21).

It is also an interesting question, whether the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God or the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21), can have its full accomplishment in the millennium?

How blessed it is to see all things subdued by Christ, and brought under the power of God! Celestial glory and terrestrial glory preserving each its separate qualities, and yet both to the praise and glory of God, and such as He can rest and delight in. Death destroyed, curse no more known, and every creature, whether in the new earth or in the new heaven, realizing the presence and blessing of God, who is all in all.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen {Rom. 11:33-36}.

Chapter 21:9 to 22:6: the Bride, the Lamb's Wife

We now come to the last section of this solemn Book. As in former instances, so now, the seer is led back again, for he is to learn the position and glory of the Church in the millennial age.

I here repeat what was mentioned when considering the seventeenth chapter, that it appears as if the same angel that showed to John the mystery of THE GREAT WHORE, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, now, in widest possible contrast, points to THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE. To see the former, he was led into the wilderness; for the latter he had to look up towards heaven. Both needed the power of the Spirit to be discerned. As the harlot was likened to a city, so is the bride. The false thing was symbolized by a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth; the bride of the Lamb is also called that great city. We need not the Holy Ghost to see literal cities: the natural vision is enough for that. The things of God are discerned only by the Spirit of God. The book of Revelation abundantly teaches us this.

The heavenly calling and standing of the Church of God is often noticed in the epistles of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Even now we are spoken of as

partakers of the heavenly calling {Heb. 3:1},

as quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; in the eternal state, we saw the bride coming down from God out of heaven; and in connection with millennial glory, John saw,

that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God {Rev. 21:10}.

If Jerusalem means, as is generally considered, "a dwelling in peace," we can easily understand why the bride is so called. Securely fixed upon the peacemaking, peace-speaking power of the blood of Jesus, she knows now the full enjoyment of

peace with God {Rom. 5:1},

and

the peace of God {Phil. 4:7},

under the everlasting shelter of

the God of peace {Heb. 13:20, 21}.

Holy city {Rev. 21:10, {see New Trans., JND}}

becomes her, because holiness characterizes her, and no false or defiling thing can enter there (Rev. 21:27). She is

new Jerusalem {Rev. 3:12; 21:2},

because that city which should have been a dwelling of peace, a glory and praise in the earth, became spiritually Sodom and Egypt; They knew not the Prince of peace; they crucified the Lord of glory; they refused the gospel of peace, the forgiveness of sins; and rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Hence that city, Jerusalem, could not be a dwelling of peace. No marvel, then, that we find the counsels of Divine grace teaching us about a new Jerusalem. It is a great {rather, “holy”} city, because it comprehends all the members of the body of Christ. It comes out of heaven, because the saints, having previously been translated to the Father’s house, are now manifested to the praise of the glory of Divine grace; then the world will know what they are so ignorant of now, that the Father hath loved us even as He loved Jesus. It comes

from God {Rev. 21:10},

because Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, and we have been made nigh to God in Christ Jesus, and by His blood. Christ Himself is our righteousness; our life is hid with Christ in God, and He has given us the glory which the Father gave Him; — hence it is now noticed that John saw the bride,

having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal {Rev. 21:11}.

What wondrous heights of grace! and yet those heights were counselled in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Can we think, beloved, of anything higher or more blessed for any creature than this?

It may be asked by some, What proof have you that the bride, the Lamb’s wife, is the Church? I give, in reply, the following reasons: —

1. The Church is taught to expect to be manifested to the world, that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us-ward through Christ Jesus.
2. The twelve foundations, having in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, seem to identify this city with one of the special characters of the Church, which, we are told in Ephesians, is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, that is, that they were the doctrinal founders of the Church.
3. It is evidently a symbolic and not a literal city, for the seer is not summoned to behold a city, but the bride, the Lamb’s wife. He looks for her. In what imagery she would be presented in the vision he could not say; his soul was prepared by the angel for a vision of the Lamb’s wife. It is clearly, then, a symbolic city. It is not even a city where the bride should dwell. He is called to see the bride, and he beholds her in the symbol of a city. In the contrast of the harlot, as before noticed, he also saw a symbolic city — a city in which was found the blood of all that were slain on the earth — a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth. How is it possible to apply such language literally? Besides, the dimensions of the golden city are given, and can we imagine a literal city coming down from God out of heaven 12,000 furlongs; or 1500 miles in height? We know, too, how symbolic language abounds in the book of Revelation.

and Morning Star, we are immediately told that

the Spirit and the bride say, Come {Rev. 22:17},

Now I ask, Can such a posture of soul be ascribed to any but the Church of God? To whom else has He been revealed as the bright and Morning Star? and who else has had, or ever will have, such a hope? The Jewish remnant will by-and-by long for Messiah to come, to bring them into their inheritance and kingdom, but they will know Him as the Sun of righteousness, bringing healing to Israel, and trampling their enemies in His fury; they will cry to God to send down vengeance on those around them, as many of the Psalms teach us. But the bride not only deeply longs in ardent affection for the Lord Himself,

the bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)

which comes before sunrise, but she throws her arms wide open, in the spirit of the Savior of sinners, and cries to the Christless and godless around her, saying

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Let the reader attentively consider whether with these facts it is possible to think of the bride being any other than the Church of God!

5. The calling and expectation of the Church is that of eternal union with Christ. Christ is said to make in Himself of twain

one new man {Eph. 2:15}

— He the Head and we the members; so that we are even now

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}.

We are told that

Christ . . . loved the Church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:25, 27-29, 32).

Would not such a Scripture lead us to expect that the Church of God would have a distinct character as the bride, the Lamb's wife?

6. The gold and precious stones that abound in this city are figures used by the Holy Ghost to symbolise true saints on a former occasion. In 1 Cor. 3, when building upon the foundation laid, which is Jesus Christ, is considered, the apostle warns labourers in the gospel against accrediting persons as on that blessed foundation who are merely of the earth earthy, and not partakers of eternal life, not born from above; only wood, hay, and stubble, instead of being heavenly and divine — gold, silver, and precious stones. Thus we are not surprised to find this holy city, new Jerusalem, of pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones (Rev. 21:18, 19).

Are not these reasons sufficient for our concluding that the Church and bride are identical? We know that all the saints who are in the first resurrection will be in the reign with Christ in millennial glory, though that is not contemplated here, because the subject is specially the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Church, as the candlestick, may be shattered; but as the Lamb's wife she shall live; and this golden city is the Bride of the Lamb, the Church of God now manifested in her perfectness. . . . She is the habitation of the glory of God, the place of the throne, a sanctuary, too, as well as a palace, having a presence within her which makes the whole scene a temple. Thus is she the suited dwelling-place of kings and priests; and being thus in herself the beautiful one, and bearing with her this honor of the royal priesthood, all that goes forth from her, or enters into her, or dwells there, is according to these things. Light is shed from her, that the nations may walk therein: water from the river of life flows from her, bearing leaves with it, that the nations may be healed thereby; and all that goes in is purity; and all who dwell within are in joy and dignity, having no need of candle, nor even light of the sun, being also in the conscious dignity of their everlasting kingdom; and nothing must touch such a habitation of holiness and gladness and glory, but the very honor of the kings of the earth. They may bring up their glory and honor unto it, but nothing less than that can approach it."

The kingdom is here displayed in its holy order and righteous authority. It is the golden city we get, the symbol of righteousness and power united in government — the Church, with the enthroned Lamb descending out of heaven to take association with the earth, ruling it and yet blessing it, presiding over it in righteousness, and yet dispensing to it the water of life, and the light of the glory, of the very fountains of which she had now become the scene and the dwelling-place."

"Fair distant land, could now our eyes

But half its charms explore,

How would our spirits long to rise,

And dwell on earth no more!"

The jasper wall, great and high, tells us not only of glory and beauty in keeping with every other part of the city, but also of security and separation; and if of the earthly city it will be said,

Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces {Psa. 122:7},

how much more will this heavenly city be the place of endless peace and unchanging blessing? There is something Divine, something consistent with the glory of God, in the symbol of the jasper wall; for we find, in the vision of the presence of God on the throne in the fourth chapter, that the One who sat upon the throne was like a jasper and a sardine stone.

The twelve foundations show its perfect stability: perfect, I say, for it was also twelve times twelve, or a hundred and forty-four cubits high. But it is human, and not Divine, perfection; for it was according to man's measure, that is, the angel's. (Rev. 21:17). We find twelve frequently used as a symbol of perfection in human affairs. We have twelve hours in a day, twelve months in a year, twelve tribes of Israel. This city, too, is remarkably made up of twelves; it has twelve foundations, twelve gates, twelve angels. Whichever way it is measured, its length, breadth, and height are

each twelve thousand furlongs. The shape of the city, therefore, is a cube. This shows it is perfect, that there is no inequality, nothing wanting. The street (not streets) of the city, emblem of the place of traffic and walk, which on earth is always the place of defilement, is here characterized by perfect purity, transparency, and that which is Divine and righteous. All is light and holiness, and peace.

O sweet and pleasant soil!

In thee no sorrow can be found,

No grief, no care, no toil.”

The twelve gates always open, seen in each direction, north, south, east, and west, tell us, too, of administrative government. The gate of a city, in Scripture language, is the place of rule, power, and judgment. Hence we get the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written thereon. We must remember here, that though the scene is simply one of the bride, the Lamb's wife, yet the period is the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Others will be associated in the reign with the bride, though not distinctively of her; for we have been previously taught, that all who are in

the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5, 6}

live and reign with Christ. In that day, too, heaven will be truly God's throne, and the earth His footstool, yet the place of His feet shall be glorious. It will be glory above and glory below, each distinct, and yet one whole kingdom-scene of power and glory; for the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. When the heavens are thus opened, angels of God will be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of man. All His various relationships shall then be sustained in infinite beauty, order, perfection, and truth. As the last Adam, Head of the body, Bridegroom of the Church, King of Israel, Governor among the nations, King over all the earth, He shall wear His many crowns and dispense His manifold blessings; and as He, the Upholder of all things, now sustains the mighty planets in their various revolutions, so then, when all things are gathered together in one, both things on earth and things in heaven, even in Him, there shall still be diversity, even as in creation's fair history it is recorded that every fruit tree yielded fruit after his kind.

The kings of the earth bring their glory to or unto this city. Those dwelling there eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7). The leaves of the tree minister healing to the nations, which is enlightened by the glory of the city. It will be a chain of golden links of rich and varied blessings, each part of the different kingdom spheres dependent one on another, and all dependent on the Lord.

It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord; I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel (Hos.2:21, 22),

the seed of God.

The living water, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb, pure and clear, flows copiously like a river, deepening and widening in its progress, through this city of heavenly blessing. All drink plentiful draughts of its endless, exhaustless depths of grace. Each sees the

face of Jesus, and bears His name in the forehead; and then will be realized more fully what we know in some little measure now, that

the joy of the Lord is our strength {see Neh. 8:10};

for service will still flow from a joyful heart in ministry to the need of the nations. And out of this city shall flow judgment, and, doubtless, blessing too, to the favoured tribes of Israel's land: for our Lord's promise to the apostle was, that in the regeneration, which is the time we are considering,

Ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel

restored Israel will be almost a counterpart of the heavenly city: and among other similitudes, water will so flow out from under the threshold of the house of the Lord, as to become so deep and wide as to form a river to swim in, and which will give life to every thing whithersoever the river shall come. Nor is this the only idea of life and blessing in connection with the times of restitution, the period of Israel's glory; for we are told, that

by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine (Ezek. 47:12).

Then Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the whole earth with fruit. Out of the earthly city shall flow earthly glory, government, and blessing. The inhabitants of Zion shall be joyful in their King, while they and the saved nations walk in the light of the golden city. Then

the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2, 3).

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee (Psa. 22:27).

Creation, too, will rejoice in her liberty from the groaning and bondage of corruption, at the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-22). The Lord then, sitting upon the throne of His father David, shall judge the people in righteousness, and the poor with judgment. (See Psa. 72.)

The pearly gates and variety of precious stones and gold that mark the structure of this symbolic city show us how costly are its materials; and when we think that it is the bride, the Lamb's wife, her priceless value in God's sight, the cost, the unutterable cost of that city is forced upon our minds. When none else could redeem, we know that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that he might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. What a price! What costly stones are sinners saved by the blood of the Lamb! How precious they must be to the heart of the Lord Jesus!

"Oh yes, Christ loves the Church,

'Tis her He lives to bless;

He cannot love her more,
Nor will He love her less;
Bone of His bone, cleansed by His word,
A bride adorned meet for her Lord."

It is interesting to observe the Scripture notices of "gold" and "precious stones," so largely characteristic of this heavenly city.

When this fair creation came fresh from the Maker's hands, we are told that Eden not only had a river flowing through it to water the garden, but that it had gold and bdellium and the onyx stone; or as the inspired prophet by the river of Chebar more fully expresses it,

Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God: every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold (Ezek. 28:13).

Creation then was something on which God's eye and heart could rest, and pronounce very good. But sin came in and marred this beauteous, spotless universe. It was soon overrun with the foul spirit of the prince of darkness, and we see not the precious stones and gold brought into prominence until there was something introduced in which God could again delight. The tabernacle and priesthood, in connection with an elect people, bring precious stones again before us in settings of gold. The breastplate and shoulder-pieces of the high priest were resplendent with the dazzling glory of the costly stones in their gold inclosures. They were a shadow of good things to come. They pictured glory as resulting from Divine grace through the redemption work of Jesus. But soon again these shadowy jewels passed away. A dark history set in, and the holy Son of God, the tried stone and the precious stone, was found here in veiled glory, a stranger and despised One in this world that He had fashioned. He wore no jewels, for He Himself was the precious corner stone. His glory was in humiliation and rejection as the righteous and holy One. His beauty and glory were hid from the carnal eye; but once and again heaven opened to declare,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 3:17; 17:5}.

The glory of His humiliation and death will shine eternally in untarnished lustre. His sufferings and sacrifice were the golden chains of Divine love to unite us to God for ever.

"That visage marred, those sorrows deep,
The vinegar and gall;
These were the golden chains of love,
His captives to enthrall."

But His sufferings are over. He has accomplished eternal redemption. He is now at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor. We get no more mention of "gold" and "precious stones" till we read of true saints, those who are not "wood, hay, and stubble," merely of earth's growth, but those who are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

It is interesting, however, to observe, that the devil, who mimics God whenever he can, so as most effectually to deceive, uses gold and precious stones. He misplaces the type, to blind souls to the antitype. The gospel declares that Christ is a precious stone, and that believers in Him are precious stones also. But Satan says, No. He adorns Babylon with all manner of precious stones, and furnishes her with a golden cup by which to intoxicate and deceive. The true believer knows nothing “precious,” apart from Christ. He Himself is “precious,” His blood is precious, faith is precious, because it links us on to Him, and the trial of faith is precious, because it will be found to His praise and honor at His appearing.

Again, however, there will be that on which the eye and heart of God can rest. Israel, His earthly people, shall yet be numbered up as His jewels, and introduced into terrestrial glory; and the bride, the Lamb’s wife, shall be in heavenly glory, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It is permanent, lasting blessing. The new creation shall have eternal lustre, all flowing from the wondrous sufferings and death of the Lamb of God. Fair and comely in His sight, she shall be manifested as established in everlasting blessing and security before God. We can understand then, I think, why “gold” and “precious stones” are here again used, — to show the priceless value, stability, and glory of those who are so loved by God, and brought into such unchanging nearness to Him through the blood of the Lamb.

No temple is seen here, because all are at home with God and the Lamb. A temple always gives the idea of the worshiper being at a distance from God; He is as it were enshrined, because of His holiness. Even now a temple is out of place for those who are made nigh by the blood of Christ, and therefore have right and title, through the rent veil, to approach God Himself, because of that one Sacrifice which was once offered, and the ever living High Priest. The seer therefore tells us, when contemplating the glorious vision of this holy city,

I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it (Rev. 21:22).

Nor was there any need of created light; whether of sun or moon, nor of artificial light — no need of the candle; for there shall be no night there; and also because

the Lord God giveth them light (Rev. 22:5)

—

the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev. 21:23).

There is a remarkable similarity between the scene of the first man in blessing in Eden and the holy Jerusalem. We are told that in creation’s primal glory there was a river and gold and precious stones, a happy created universe, a tree of life, the man and his wife. A progeny also is contemplated —

Be fruitful, and multiply {Gen. 1:28}.

The Lord God is mentioned too, in connection with all, and finding rest in all. There was also the tree of knowledge, as a test of man’s faithfulness. In the closing scene of the Apocalypse we have a river of life, gold and precious stones, circles of glory and blessing extending over the kingdom, the tree of life (much of which description is doubtless symbolical language) and the Lord God, the throne of God and the Lamb, the Bride the Lamb’s wife in connection with it all. But here there is

no tree of knowledge; for man had been tried in various ways, and always found to be incapable of standing, except as upheld by God. So now; being made to stand upon the everlasting efficacy of the blood of the Lamb, his perfect security rests on the ground of redemption. There shall therefore be no more curse. How precious the blood of Christ is, and should be, to us!

“O precious blood! O glorious death!

By which the sinner lives;

When stung with sin this blood we view.

And all our joy revives.

“The blood that makes His glorious Church

From every blemish free;

And oh, the riches of His love,

He poured it out for me!

“The Father’s everlasting love,

And Jesu’s precious blood,

Shall be our endless themes of praise

In yonder blest abode”

Chapter 22:6-21: Concluding Verses

As we had introductory remarks to the sayings of the prophecy of this book, so we find concluding statements which appear as postscripts to a letter. The prominent thought in them is the Lord's announcement to the assemblies of His own speedy coming. This is what we should have expected. What so welcome to the members of His body as Himself! It would have been strange for our Lord to have given us various details of things coming upon the earth, without plainly keeping before us our proper hope — the one hope of our calling. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets was wont to guide them to conclude their testimonies with earth's only hope — the day of the Lord — Messiah's reign — the times of restitution which follow righteous judgments; but in the apocalyptic testimony to the assemblies, we find the relief for the heart oppressed by the sorrows coming upon the children of men, is the Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself.

In order to leave no room for question, as to the reality and accomplishment of this prophetic book, we are assured that

these sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done (Rev. 22:6).

Thus the Divine character of the prophetic testimony is attested, and the introductory announcement repeated, that these things will shortly come to pass. Time hurries on with rapid flight. Events follow in such quick succession, that eternal realities will soon dawn upon a slumbering world. How secretly, yet surely, the leaven of infidelity is diffusing itself! How rapidly the spirit of irreverence for the things of God, and desire for the exaltation of man, are growing! What patronage, too, the great harlot is receiving! How many seem satisfied to have their intellects amused and senses intoxicated with the adulterous wine, because it still allows the heart to maintain its enmity against God, and leaves the conscience unmoved by its sin and guilt; and with what increasing boldness among all nations she holds out the golden cup, brimful of all manner of filthiness, to the myriads of passers by! These things are enough to show us how soon the apocalyptic prophecies may be accomplished, and how unmistakably we see the day approaching.

What effect, beloved, should these things have upon us whose citizenship is in heaven, but to look for the Savior! What else can meet the need of our hearts? Hence the next words are,

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7}!

because it is Christ who is our hope; not events, but the Lord Himself.

“For thee, His royal Bride, for thee,

His brightest glories shine;

And, happier still, His changeless love,

With all its joy; is thine.”

John tells us that he saw and heard these things, and that the effect of seeing and hearing them was most overpowering. And not only so; for, alas! how weak is man! how little can any of us bear! how badly can we be trusted! Again we find this honored seer at the angel's feet, a worshiper of that bright messenger who had showed him these things. Again the honored vessel came between him and the Lord. He idolizes the instrument; he worships the creature, though he did it ignorantly. He might have thought that this heavenly messenger was Jesus. Solemn lesson for us. Alas! how true it is that we are kept by the power of God. The angel, however, is more faithful than the loved and aged seer, and rebukes him for his folly.

Then saith he, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and [the fellow-servant] of thy brethren the prophets. Worship God (Rev. 22:8, 9).

Would, beloved, that we might be instructed by this angel to be more ready than we are to refuse everything that robs God of what belongs to Him and that we had a deeper sense in our souls of what is due to Christ, so as to be alone jealous for His glory. This surely is the only way of realizing present blessing.

The prophet Daniel was told to go his way, because

the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end (Dan. 12);

but John is told to

seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand (Rev. 22:10).

The things here revealed are therefore to be published; men are both to be instructed and warned, because the time is so very near. How important and necessary it is, therefore, for those who would be faithful servants of Christ to be well acquainted with the things here revealed; for they are no longer to be sealed, but to be made known. A few more fleeting moments and man's eternal doom will be for ever fixed; and though myriads of ages roll on, the sentence will be,

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still (Rev. 22:11).

Those who now act so unjustly toward the God of all grace and His only-begotten Son, the Savior of sinners, will then ever be among the unjust. Let ten thousand times ten thousand years pass, and still it will be said,

He which is filthy, let him be filthy still (Rev. 22:11).

Having despised the only sin-cleansing remedy, they will learn in outer darkness that nothing but the blood of Jesus could cleanse a sinner, and make him fit to stand in God's infinitely holy presence. Ah, how little men think that they insult God and dishonor Christ by refusing that only atonement which He has provided for sinners in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! But of those who have accepted Christ as their Savior, who are sanctified by His blood, and made the righteousness of God in Him, it will be for ever true

—

He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still (Rev. 22:11).

The fifteenth verse shows us the unclean ones outside — the Gentile dogs as well as the children of Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations, or idolatries; those who in heart depart from God to gratify their lusts, and all others who loved the lie of infidelity, which is always placed by the enemy in opposition to the truth, which truth those only love who are truly born of God.

Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie (Rev. 22:15).

But on the other hand, how sweet it is to see our precious Lord reminding us that His blood-washed ones have title to stand in changeless blessing before God, even in the unsullied holiness of His glorious presence, there to feed upon living realities, and enter into the kingdom of the living God.

Blessed are they that do His commandments [or rather, Blessed are they that wash their robes], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (Rev. 22:14).

We find, within the compass of a few verses, that the Lord announces His speedy coming three times, as if in this last letter it should be the last thought He would impress upon our minds. He also reminds us of His eternal Godhead —

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Rev. 22:13).

It need scarcely be said, that no one could lay claim to such titles but He who is God, that blessed One who left the world to go to the Father, who has sent down the Holy Ghost, and is gone to prepare a place for us. It is He who here says,

Behold, I come quickly (Rev. 22:7). Behold, I come quickly (Rev. 22:12). Surely, I come quickly (Rev. 22:20).

These things are testified in the Churches, to whom the Lord's last presentation of Himself is the Root and Offspring of David, and THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR (Rev. 22:16).

As David's Creator and David's Offspring, the Godhead and manhood of Him who sent these things to the Churches are plainly set forth, and shows us that all the promises of royalty, and everything connected with the future kingdom of Israel, are secured in Him. The final sentences of this blessed book make us feel deeply that

the night is far spent {Rom. 13:12},

and we are encouraged, during the closing moments of the dark night, to look out for the Morning Star. It is the harbinger of the day. Those only who are watching see it. To such it is a glorious sight. Those who are slumbering on their beds see it not. It is a blessed prospect for us, because it is the Lord who here subscribes Himself —

I, Jesus . . . I am the bright and Morning Star {Rev. 22:16}.

We know it will be followed by

the Sun of righteousness {Mal. 4:2}

arising upon this desolate earth with healing in His wings, when He will make up His jewels of the elect people of Israel, and tread down the wicked as ashes under His feet. But there is no allusion, in this presentation of the Lord as the Morning Star, to any judgment upon the ungodly, which characterizes the testimony of prophets, because here it is simply the announcement of Him who is coming to meet us in the air, and receive us unto Himself. Our joy will be full then; for we shall see Him as He is, before Israel and the earth are delivered from their oppression. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Therefore we wait for God's Son from heaven, the bright and Morning Star, to take us out of this scene, and to be for ever with Him and like Him.

"Panting with rapture and surprise,
'Caught up,' our fond affections rise,
Our coming Lord to meet;
Hearing the trumpet's glorious sound;
Soaring to join the rising crowd;
Gazing upon the parted cloud
Beneath His pierced feet.

"O blessed, O thrice blessed word!
To be 'for ever with the Lord'
In heavenly beauty, fair!
Up! up! we long to hear the cry,
Up! up! our coming Lord draws nigh,
Yes, 'in the twinkling of an eye,'
To meet Him in the air."

No sooner, then, does the blessed Lord present Himself as the bright and Morning Star, than there is a response, —

The Spirit and the Bride say, COME {Rev. 22:17};
for it is the Holy Ghost dwelling in the saints that teaches them, and enables them to say,
Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is well to see that the Holy Spirit shows us things to come, and inspires us with hope; that He teaches us to cry,

Come, Lord Jesus.

Surely nothing else could ever satisfy the bride's heart; for she is espoused to one husband, and her assurance is that she will be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ. Those who are taught of

God love the Lord Jesus. They truly say —

“No object so glorious we see,

And none so attractive to us.”

The affections and desires of the saints are drawn out after Christ, for what He is in Himself, in all the perfectness of Divine and changeless love. It would seem as if there were an intimation here of bridal affections characterizing saints just before the Lord's return: not all saints; for the next sentence shows us that some are not thus responding to our Lord's revelation of Himself as

the bright and Morning Star:

hence the exhortation,

Let him that heareth say, Come {Rev. 22:17}.

And is it not very remarkable how love for the person of our Lord, and desire for His coming, characterize many saints now? In almost all times of the history of the Church there have been those who have rejoiced before God in the finished work of Christ, redemption by His blood, and have willingly suffered for His sake. But there is something more in the present day, low and humbling as our condition is in many respects; there is a manifest, and I think in some an increasing attachment to the Lord Himself, with the longing desire to see Him. In many parts of England and Ireland, on the Continent, and in other parts of the world, how frequently is the cry going up to heaven from longing souls, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!” and in various ways how cherished and cultivated are what may be properly called bridal affections towards Christ? And if so, is it not like the rousing of the slumbering virgins at the cry of,

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him {Matt. 25:6}?

which is soon followed by all those who have oil in their vessels with their lamps meeting Him, and going to the marriage. Who knows how soon this blessed hope may be realized by us, beloved! How encouraging this view of the subject is, and how calculated to stir the affections of our souls in becoming fervour to our Lord!

But further. In connection with this, as I have noticed, there appear to be some who do not say,

Come, Lord Jesus;

hence it is added,

Let him that heareth say, Come.

What hinders them from thus responding to our Lord? Is it from bad teaching, a lack of spiritual instruction on the subject? Is it worldliness of spirit? for eating and drinking with the drunken is associated in Scripture with the unholy sentiment,

My Lord delayeth His coming {Matt. 24:48; Luke 12:45}.

Is it carnal-mindedness? allowing fleshly lusts and tempers to grieve and quench the Spirit of God, and thus hinder His teaching. It may be that malice, guile, hypocrisy, and evil speakings, are not laid aside (for they are natural to us all), and spiritual desires and growth are checked, and thus

hinder the cry in the soul, of Come, Lord Jesus! Is it the habit of carelessness and insubjection to Christ, not keeping His words? for the Church is supposed in Scripture to be subject unto Christ; and those true to Him, who keep His words, sayings, and commandments, are promised the enjoyment of sweet manifestations of Christ, and abiding fellowship with the Father and the Son. Whatever it be that hinders the soul from truly giving utterance to the cry of

Come, Lord Jesus,

it should be detected and judged; for the inspired declaration is,

Let him that heareth say, Come {Rev. 22:17}.

With this intimation of a company on earth inspired with bridal affections towards Christ, we have also bowels of mercies going out in deep Christ-like love and compassion towards the lost around. This is another important thought in reference to the present day; for who has not observed how largely the gospel of the grace of God has gone forth of late, and that by servants of God who look for the coming of our Lord! Here they are linked together, for a present salvation is associated in Scripture with this blessed hope; and who can conceive a heart really touched with love towards Christ, and waiting for His coming, that does not long for the salvation of souls? I know nothing so calculated to till coming. If the above view be correct, we may be now in the very closing days of the Church's history on earth.

The "thirsty" are considered here. Disturbed or dissatisfied with what their poor hearts have tasted, they crave something more. Earth's charms have been vainly tried. Nature's resources are exhausted. The emptiness of men's inventions painfully experienced. Their own hope of self-improvement has been woefully disappointing. That which they most eagerly sought has failed to satisfy. A dead fly has been found in it all. The soul longs and pants for something else. It really thirsts for what can give present rest, and meet eternal realities. Such are here addressed,

Let him that is athirst come {Rev. 22:17}.

The Lord Jesus alone can relieve such. He can give rest. His blood purges the conscience. He gives eternal life. He saves at once and for ever.

But there are many who seem not to thirst; but they are unsaved, going on the broad road, trying to get comfort in themselves, or in the world, or anywhere but in Christ. Such were some of us. Still the gospel addresses itself, to sinners, ungodly, enemies. As the the Lord said in the beginning of His ministry,

Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish {John 3:15, 16},

so now, at the very close, it is,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

It is the fullest, freest grace. Throwing His loving arms wide open, He welcomes any, every sinner that will take eternal life at His hands as a free gift. How rich is this mercy. Can anything exceed the gracious fervour of the Lord toward the lost? or can a more thorough welcome be intimated to the soul that desires eternal life? It is not a question of terms or conditions, but God in Christ taking the place of a giver, and making the soul eternally happy that is willing to be a receiver, content to

be saved in God's way — thus accepting Christ as his Savior, and giving all the glory to God! Observe, it is not a question of religion at all; there is no room for pleading ordinances, no advantage proffered to the moralist, nothing repulsive set before the most profane: it is simply a question of life eternal, and possessed, too, not by those who hold orthodox views even of the gospel, but by those who take Christ as their Savior: not by those who say they think of Christ, or pray to Christ, or work for Christ; but by those who take Christ:

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

Worship, service, and other fruits of faith, of course follow. They are the effects of life received, not the cause. A mistake here is of eternal importance. The saved sinner can sing —

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,

'Behold, I freely give

The living water: thirsty one,

Stoop down, and drink, and live.'

I came to Jesus, and I drank

Of that life-giving stream,

My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,

And now I live in Him.

'I am this dark world's light.

Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,

And all thy day be bright.'

I looked to Jesus, and I found

In Him my star, my sun;

And in that light of life I'll walk

Till travelling days are done."

Before this blessed little book is concluded, we find a remarkable parenthesis. The awful sins of adding to and taking from God's Word are plainly insisted upon. These we know are not uncommon errors. The Lord especially refers to the book of Revelation, but the Old Testament sounds a somewhat similar warning.

Every word of God is pure. . . . Add thou not to His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:5, 6).

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it (Deut. 4:2).

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deut. 12:32).

The Lord has been always jealous for the maintenance of His own truth. Saul lost the kingdom because he obeyed not the word of the Lord (1 Sam. 15:28).

We know, too, what judgments came upon Jehoiakim king of Judah for cutting and burning the word of the Lord written on the roll of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 36:29, 30). The canon of Scripture is complete. To add to it must be deeply offensive to God. It must be the fruit of a proud and unbelieving heart. The warning is addressed to every man that even heareth the prophecy of this book; and in executing the sentence, God will be no respecter of persons.

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book (Rev. 22:18).

Nor is it a light thing either to take away from the complete revelation that God has graciously given. Believers are supposed in Scripture to be

subject unto Christ (Eph. 5:24).

Practical Christianity consists in owning the lordship of Jesus: and the Christian's warfare is carried on in the exercise of

casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

The soul, therefore, that is spiritual, under divine teaching, cannot fail to be jealous for God's Word. The old sin of making the Word of God of none effect by man's tradition is still round about us; for the unsubdued will is ever read to own any other authority than God's and follow any other guidance. Man's traditions, however, alter according to circumstances, and the commandments of men pass away with those who decree them; but

the word of the Lord endureth for ever {1 Pet. 1:25}.

Jesus said,

I have given them thy word {John 17:14}. Thy word is truth {John 17:17}.

Sanctify them through thy truth {John 17:17}.

divine standard, and taking the unholy liberty of setting aside any portion of the truth of the Revelation.

If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part [portion] out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:19).

Can anything be more solemn? or could any words be more thoroughly invested with divine authority? Need we anything more to persuade us of the deep value and weighty import of the book? or to prompt us to read it with prayerfulness of spirit and true subjection of heart before

God? We know how ready the intellect is to frame theories, and go to the Scripture for some license for their existence; in other words, to go to God's Word to get something to endorse a system, instead of bowing down in self-loathing, and felt ignorance, to receive what God has to say to us in His Word by the Spirit's teaching. O for real subjection of heart to Christ!

Again and again, as we have before noticed, the Lord announces at the close of this book that He is coming quickly, and each announcement is connected with a different character of thought, which we may do well to consider.

The first is,

Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:7).

We were assured, at the opening of the Revelation, of the blessing connected with those who keep the things written therein; and though, doubtless, such feel now the blessing of God in all their endeavours to keep what is here set forth, still the Lord's own testimony of approval will be specially known by each one at His coming. This prophetic book shows us the working of principles, and their results. Lawlessness is here described in all its horrible ungodliness. Religiousness comes out in dark forms of infidelity and superstition. Things true and things false stand here in widest contrast. Christ and Antichrist, the remnant and the apostate people, the bride and the harlot, are all brought out. Every vision carries with it some deep, searching, moral testimony to the affections and conscience. The sayings of the prophecy of this book are powerfully commended to the heart and judgment. The Lamb in majesty and glory is here seen. He is the great object of attraction.

"No place too high for Him is found,

No place too high in heaven."

It is therefore an eminently sanctifying book, most awakening to the spiritual affections and desires, most instructive as to the principles of everything at work around us; so that those who heed its teaching must get immense blessing now, and find the Lord's approval at His coming.

Secondly, we find in the 12th verse,

Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be (Rev. 22:12).

Not a cup of cold water given to a disciple out of love to Jesus shall lose its reward then. When our Lord spake of making a feast, and calling the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind, He said,

Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).

Those who do not glide down the religious stream, but are separate in heart and walk unto the Lord, in subjection to His word and Spirit, must be content to be present losers, to be misunderstood, and not surprised at having their motives misjudged; but we must walk before Him who searches the heart, and by whom actions are weighed, knowing that when He comes again He will not withhold His

Well done {Matt. 25:21, 23}

from what He can approve. How different will many things appear then! How much that is now applauded will be found lighter than vanity, when tried in the balance of the sanctuary; and how truly it will be manifested then, that things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God. But Jesus says,

My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

How encouraging! We have now to

fight the good fight of faith {1 Tim. 6:12}, to

earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints {Jude 1:3},

to

keep the word of His patience {see Rev. 3:10},

to be

obedient children {1 Pet. 1:14};

in a word, to follow Christ. We are to suffer with Christ, and suffer for Christ; to bear the reproach of Christ; to be rejected with Christ; not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; and in all things to serve the Lord Christ. We are to be mindful of everything around us only in relation to Christ; to have an eye to His glory, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, to continue in His love, and manifest true friendship to Him, so that His joy may remain in us, and that our joy may be full. Happy are those who can esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the world, because they have respect unto the recompense of the reward; or, like the apostles, can rejoice at being counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

We now come to the third and final announcement of our Lord's return. They are the Lord's last words to the Churches, and are most cheering —

Surely I come quickly {Rev. 22:20}.

This assurance leaves no room for a question. What our Lord's thought of "quickly" may be, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, is a point we might consider; but certain it is that He thus leaves his Church in the position of expectancy of Himself. Whatever events have been recorded, He presents Himself as the alone hope, and He would have us in the posture of patiently waiting for Him, and occupying till He comes.

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching (Luke 12:37).

A hearty sympathy with our Lord's announcement is then brought out —

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is not merely, "Come," but,

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Nothing can be plainer. It is the outflowing of affection to the Lord Himself. It is the longing heart of Jesus meeting with true response in His saints. Are we, beloved reader, in sympathy with the blessed Lord? It is possible to hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and to have knowledge of prophetic truth, without having the Lord Jesus, as the longing desire of the soul. It is not knowledge, but the hope, that purifies, and separates us unto the Lord (1 John 3:3). I ask, then, Is He the hope of our souls? Is it Christ Himself that we are looking for? This is eminently practical, and soul-purifying: for a believer not to be waiting for God's Son from heaven is sadly defective, and connected with great spiritual loss.

The time may be short or long, according to human reckoning, before our Lord's return; but during the interval there is all-sufficient grace in Him for every need and distress; and thus the Revelation concludes with,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen {Rev. 22:21}.

"Lord Jesus, come!

Nor let us longer roam

Afar from thee, and that bright place

Where we shall see thee face to face:

Lord Jesus, come!

"Lord Jesus, come!

Thine absence here we mourn.

Nor joy we know apart from thee,

Nor sorrow in thy presence see:

Come, Jesus, come!

"Lord Jesus, come!

And claim us as thine own;

Our weary feet would wander o'er

This dark and sinful world no more:

Come, Savior, come!

"Lord Jesus, come!

And take thy people home,

That all thy flock, so scattered here,

With thee in glory may appear:

Lord Jesus, come!"

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