

The  
**Revelation of Jesus Christ.**

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BY E. H. CHATER.



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## PREFACE.

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IN presenting the following thoughts on the Book of the Revelation to the general reader, the writer would invite careful comparison with the teaching of the word of God. Where he has departed from the generally received text of the English authorised version of the holy scriptures, he has followed the well-known translation by J. N. D. (Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square, London, E.C.). The thoughts are the outcome of many years consideration of the contents of the book, and as such they are presented with the hope **and** prayer that believers may receive edification **and** blessing therefrom, and that unconverted souls may be warned to find a refuge and salvation in Christ.

E. H. C.

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## CHAPTER I.

“THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.” (Rev. i. 1, 2.)

This wonderful book, or prophetic utterance as it may be called, speaking broadly (see verse 3), is the revelation of Jesus Christ.\* It was given to that blessed holy Man by God Himself in order that He might shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. We must bear in mind that many centuries have elapsed since the revelation was given, so that part of it, as we shall see more clearly further on, has been already fulfilled.

Those qualified to understand it are the servants of Jesus Christ. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, etc. (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

\* He who has been “declared to be Son of God with power by resurrection.” (Rom i. 4)

But the servants are believers on Him, who have received the gift of the Spirit, and hence they are qualified to receive and understand spiritually the things which their Lord shews them, things which *must* shortly come to pass. They are communications from God, who foreknows all.

Jesus Christ does not communicate them to His servants direct. This blessed Man, Jesus, the Christ of God, is Lord and Head of all. Angels as well as men are made subject to Him. An angel and a man are both employed by Him as the means of communication with His servants. It is *His* angel, although the name is withheld. The man is His servant John, the beloved disciple, who pillowed his head upon the bosom of his Master, and who wrote the marvellous gospel concerning Him. He who dwelt here was Himself the sent One of God, sent His angel later on and signified it to His servant John on earth. And he bare a threefold record, first, of the word of God, secondly, of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and thirdly, of all things that he saw. Now the word of God abideth for ever, and is living in itself and in all its effects. The testimony of Jesus Christ is His, and in Him all that God has spoken will be fulfilled. And all things which he saw are things which either circle around Jesus Christ, the Centre of God's ways, or will be fulfilled by or through Him in blessing or in judgment.

The introduction to the book closes with a threefold blessing. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time

is at hand." (Ver. 3.) First, the blessing of God rests upon the individual who *reads*.\* Secondly, upon those, the company of individuals, that *hear* (*i.e.*, not who simply hear with the outward ear, but who hearken to) the *words* of the prophecy. The servants of Jesus Christ are to live by *every word* which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Thirdly, upon those who *keep* the things which are written therein. The three are intimately bound up together—reading, hearkening, keeping. How sad in the light of this graciously proffered blessing that any should treat this wonderful book carelessly, as hard to be understood, and containing little or no profit. Satan is well pleased when men treat the word of God with lightness and indifference. Does our reader desire this blessing of God? Then let him read, hearken to, and keep the things written therein. For the time is at hand (or near) for the fulfilment of all that God has spoken.

The message of Jesus Christ in verse 4 comes through John. He addresses himself to the seven churches (or assemblies) which are in Asia, in that day a province of what we call Asia Minor, now under the dominion of the Turk. The cities in which these assemblies of Christians were found are named in verse 11 and in chapters ii., iii. The prophet commences with a threefold greeting. First, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, which was, and which is to come." That is, from Him who is Jehovah, the great "I am," who is from

\* Probably, in that copies would be scarce, one would read, others listen, and all should treasure the words and keep the things written.

all eternity, without beginning, and who lives to all eternity, without end, the omnipresent God. Secondly, "from the seven Spirits which are before his throne." Need we say that there is only one Holy Spirit; but no less than four times, in keeping with the character of the book, which contains many things presented in a sevenfold way, He is also presented in His sevenfold perfection as seven Spirits, *i.e.*, as the divine agency to carry out the whole will of God in relation to the church and to the world. (Rev. i. 4; iii. 1; iv. 5; v. 6.) Thirdly, "from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." (Ver. 5.) That is, from Him whose revelation it is and who is immediately spoken of in a threefold character in relation to the past, the present, and the future. God has raised up many witnesses for Himself on earth, but Jesus Christ alone is *the* faithful Witness. And faithful even to the awful death of the cross, He lives now for ever as the Firstborn from the dead. And shortly He shall come forth as the Prince—God's Prince—the Prince of princes (Dan. viii. 25), the Prince of the kings of the earth, in that glorious world to come, which has such a prominent place in this wonderful prophecy.

The moment John has occasion to speak of this blessed One, his heart wells over in praise. To His love and work, he and all believers owe their all. Hence he bursts forth in an ascription of praise, etc., saying, "Unto him that loved [or loves] us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings [or a kingdom] and priests unto God

and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." As he is about to testify to all the wondrous things signified to him, his soul doubtless filled with the great solemnity of all the accompaniments of Christ's glory, he becomes deeply sensible of the love of Christ to His people, of the grace which led to the shedding of His precious blood to wash them from their sins, of the glorious character of the kingdom into which they had been brought, and of their wondrous position as priests to the God and Father of Jesus Christ. "To him," therefore, he breaks forth, "be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen." It was the love of Christ shewn in His death and blood-shedding that absorbed John's heart (as it surely should that of every true-hearted believer to-day), and made him happy in tribulation in the isle of Patmos, banishing all fear, in spite of the awful judgments coming upon the earth, which he was about to depict.

The next verse stands as it were by itself. It speaks of the manner of the return of Jesus Christ, of its public character, and of its effects upon the whole nation of Israel, especially upon Judah and Benjamin, which took the lead in His rejection, etc. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth (or tribes of the land) shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." (Ver. 7.) The word, "Behold," in scripture, generally calls our attention to a truth of moment. "Behold, he cometh with clouds." Most surely, "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.)

He who came in lowly bondsman's guise, and was rejected, will reappear with clouds in power and great glory. In that day every eye shall see the Man of God's choice, the One whom He delighteth to honour; those too which have pierced Him, and all the tribes of the land of Israel shall wail because of Him. Yea. Even so. These things must surely come to pass. Amen.

This is followed by a remarkable threefold presentation of the glory of His person. "I am [the] Alpha and [the] Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (Ver. 8.) The words "the beginning and the ending" are not in the original. They appear to have been added to explain the statement of the Speaker, the Lord (God); that He, the great "I am," is the A and the Z of all things. And He is the eternally existing One. He is, He was, He ever will be. And He is the Almighty. Strong indeed is He who executeth His word.

Next John speaks of the wonderful vision which he was privileged to see in the isle of Patmos, in the Ægean sea. "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience [or endurance] of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Ver. 9.) Being the Lord's chosen vessel for the transmission of a wondrous message to the churches, John identifies himself with the saints as their brother and companion in trial in relation to the kingdom, being banished on account of that which was

referred to in verse 2, namely, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Christ is omitted both times in verse 9 in the original when it speaks of Jesus. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." (Ver. 10.) John himself needed a preparation for this service, which could only be produced by the Holy Ghost. He *became* in the Spirit. It was on the Lord's day, the first of the new week, the day on which it was manifest through the resurrection of the faithful Witness, that He indeed was the Lord of all. (Rom. xiv. 8, 9; 1 Cor. vi. 14.) He heard a great voice, sounding to his ears as that of a trumpet, saying,\* "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches [which are in Asia]; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." (Ver. 11.) John is instructed to record that which he was about to see, and to send it to the seven assemblies. Seven here is the perfect spiritual number, and the seven assemblies addressed, and which are here called by the names of the cities in which they were gathered, are representative in one sense of the whole church of God at that moment upon the earth, and in another as we shall see in chapters ii. and iii., of the various successive phases of its history during the absence of Christ.

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with

\* "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." These words, too, are an interpolation on the part of the translators, part thereof being a repetition of verse 8. They are not found in the most reliable manuscripts of the original.

me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (Ver. 12-16.)

Arrested by this mighty trumpet-like voice, John turned back to see. A marvellous sight meets his vision. First, he beholds seven golden candlesticks (or lampstands). But, more wonderful still, he sees one like unto the Son of man, and that in a special character. He is clothed in priestly garments, and has priestly discrimination. John has to learn (and to transmit to us) that Christ is in the midst of His people in priestly holiness. He is Son over God's house, as we learn elsewhere. But here He is viewed like a (or the) Son of man, in priestly character, as the One who scrutinizes and judges everything that is unsuited to God in the assemblies, according to that holiness which becomes His house. Let us take earnest heed to the characteristics of God's great priestly Administrator. He is clothed with a suited priestly garment reaching down to the feet; and His affections and compassions seem to be held in here with divine righteousness. There is a certain measure of reserve. He is girt about the breasts with a *golden* girdle. "His head and his

hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." It is impossible for any Christian acquainted with Old Testament scripture to read this without his thoughts running to the presentation of the Ancient of days in Daniel vii. 9-14. The Son of man is the Ancient of days. Spotless purity characterizes the One to whom all judgment is committed. All His thoughts are holy and pure. He is the true Nazarite. "His eyes were as a flame of fire." Intense perception and penetrating judicial discernment characterize His all-searching gaze. Nothing can escape His scrutiny. We may lack transparency before men; but we are perfectly transparent to Him. He discerns every motive of our heart. He sees us through and through. "His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Brass is said to be the most unyielding of metals. He treads beneath His feet in the most unyielding and inexorable way, consuming in holy judgment everything that would work or lift up itself against God. "His voice as the sound of many waters." A voice of majesty and power which carries with it authority and commands obedience among all those who compose His church, gathered out from all nations. "And he had in his right hand seven stars." With the right hand of His might He held the seven lights in the midst of the darkness of the surrounding world, the secret meaning of which we shall see shortly. "And out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword." His word goes forth from His lips in living, operative power, with a sharpness which penetrates between soul and spirit, and which is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the

heart. (Heb. iv. 12.) "And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." The supreme power and authority of Him who is light is exercised in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. He walks up and down in His official glory, the rays of the light of His presence penetrating everywhere.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Overwhelmed with the majesty and glory of the presence of Him whom he beheld, John fell at His feet. All strength left him and he was as one dead before Him. But He laid His right hand upon him, saying unto him, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades." (Vers. 17, 18.) This rendering of the original is more exact. (See J. N. D.'s Translation.) Putting His right hand of power and grace upon His prostrate servant, the Son of man enjoins upon him not to fear. And presenting Himself to him as the first and the last, the living One, for He is the source and author of life, He reminds His servant how He *became* dead—for He it is who went into death to overcome it for the glory of God. "And behold," He continues (a word constantly employed in scripture to call attention to something of deep moment) "I am living to the ages of ages." Neither could death hold, nor the guarded cave retain Him, nor was it possible that God's Holy One should see corruption. Come forth triumphant in life, He lives for ever. To the ages of ages, which have no end, He is the glorious Man out of death, the living One, filling the sphere where death is unknown. "And have the keys of

death and of hades." This is the One who, having overcome him who had the power of death, now holds the keys of these two spheres, into which the bodies and souls of sinners enter, etc., and which will be finally cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. xx. 14.)\*

The living One commands His servant to write. "Write the things which thou has seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." (Ver. 19.)

This verse is the chief key to the right division of the Book of the Revelation. It divides it into three parts. First, that which John had seen, the vision of the One who walked in the midst of the seven lampstands; secondly, "the things which are," that is, the things which were present at the moment that he wrote, and which are depicted in chapters ii. and iii., namely, the representative assemblies of God's church on earth; thirdly, "the things which shall be hereafter," or, after these, that is, after the things which are. "Hereafter" is indefinite, but the force of the original shews that the third clause of the verse refers to things which follow at once. Hence in chapter iv. you find *the same words* repeated at the commencement and at the close of the first verse. "*After this, I looked*" followed by an invitation to John to come up to heaven, and he would be shewn things which *must* be hereafter, or *after these*.

In verse 20, the close of chapter i., we find an

\* Until Christ comes for His own, saints also die, the body going into the grave, and the spirit, unclothed, into the place of departed spirits, to await that moment when they will be raised.

explanation of the seven stars, and of the seven lampstands. "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." The word "mystery" in scripture signifies "secret." When Christ ascended to glory, and the Holy Ghost came here below, the secrets were revealed. Hence we have an explanation of the meaning of the stars and lampstands. The seven stars are (the) angels of the seven assemblies. We often find "angels" spoken of as representative of God's people on earth. (Matt. xviii. 10; Acts xii. 15.) So here. In the aspect in which the assemblies are presented, we do not get the thought of nearness, intimacy and love as in several other scriptures. (Eph. ii. 13; v. 25.) A certain distance and reserve are maintained. Generally speaking, there is more or less in the assemblies that which fails to correspond with the holiness of the One who is in the midst of them, and whose words John was to write. Hence He does not speak directly to the assemblies as such, but to the angels, who represent them. He holds the seven stars in His right hand—heavenly lights. These seven stars are angels of the seven assemblies. Christ holds them in His right hand. (Chap. i. 20; ii. 1.) In grace He maintains them at first by His power, though later on they are no longer seen in His right hand. In chapter iii. 1, where the seven stars are mentioned, the words "in his right hand" are omitted.

The seven lampstands are *golden*. (Vers. 12, 20.) They are the seven assemblies already referred

to. Gold sets forth the righteousness of God. The priestly One in their midst is girt with a golden girdle. All His ways are in righteousness. The saints compose the assemblies. God founded the assembly here in righteousness. Hence the assemblies are *golden* lampstands in the sight of God. And Christ acts in government in the midst of them, so that their practical condition may correspond with what they are in Him.

The number seven in relation to both the stars and the lampstands denotes heavenly completeness.



## CHAPTER II.

“THE things that are,” as remarked in connection with chapter i. 19, are depicted in chapters ii., iii. As has often been noticed, they contain seven epistles addressed to the angels of the seven local assemblies in the province of Asia at the time that John received the revelation of Jesus Christ at Patmos, and set forth also different phases and the moral condition of the church on earth during the absence of Christ, from shortly after His ascension to glory until His return.

Before entering into the detail and the moral lessons to be learnt from the state of each assembly, and that which the Lord has to say to it, etc., we must call the attention of our readers to the general structure of the seven epistles. Each one is addressed to the angel of a local assembly. It is the priestly One, like unto the Son of man, who dictates the epistles to John, presenting Himself to each assembly in a different character. He approves all that is suitable to His holy presence, and warns and exhorts, according to the moral state. At the close of each epistle, *the Spirit*, who is here below in the church, confirms what the Lord says, calling upon the individual saint who has an ear to hear what He (the Spirit) says, accompanied with a promise to him that overcometh, or getteth the victory. In the fourth epistle the order of these two things is reversed, and so on to the end. The reason of this is, we think, obvious, when applied to the prolonged

view to which we have referred. Declension sets in at Ephesus, and evil becomes so widespread when we read the phase of the church pictured in the fourth epistle, Thyatira, that the Lord no longer expects to find a hearing ear among the mass, but solely among those who are viewed as overcomers. And so on till the close.

As regards the different phases, declension first sets in at Ephesus, where so much was commendable when Paul wrote to that assembly, and its state such that the Holy Ghost through him could unfold to them the purposes of God in Christ, the counsels of His own will, and the settled plan of His blessed heart of love. In the epistle to Smyrna, we get the well-known period, when through Jewish opposition and heathen persecution, the church passed through a time of terrible tribulation. But Satan's efforts to destroy it put true souls on their mettle, and many suffered martyrdom rather than sacrifice the interests of Christ. Being thus foiled, the enemy changed his tactics, and scored a far greater success by the patronage of Christianity during the period pictured in Pergamos. The church further lapsed, and dwelt where Satan was enthroned in this world. The heart of Christ was drawn to His own in these trying circumstances, and some faithful testimony was still maintained. Succeeded by the Thyatira phase, we have a deeply solemn moral picture of the professing church in the so-called middle, or dark ages, when Rome was at the zenith of her direful sway, though God had still his witnesses. In the fifth epistle, to Sardis, we find an outward result in the world, which is generally be-

lieved to answer to what we call Protestantism, the fruit of the Reformation. Upon the recovery of a measure of truth, a state ensued summed up in the words "a name that thou livest, and art dead," but a few names found worthy. In the sixth, Philadelphia, we find the wonderful day of an opened door, and a remarkable work of the Spirit of God, in drawing the affections of saints to the Holy One and true, leading to exercise in the keeping of His word, the non-denial of His name, with encouragement in view of our Lord's speedy return. That day will discover how far souls individually and collectively have responded to the desire of His blessed heart. The last, Laodicea, shews that there would be a deeply serious lapse from Christ, and grace and light bestowed, resulting in sad lukewarmness and indifference, a state of things which has already widely spread more or less throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, and which is daily on the increase. We are very near the close of the state of things set forth by the seven lampstands.

Whilst Christianity, first set up in holiness and purity by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, gradually lapsed into the awful state set forth in the epistle to Thyatira, since then the revivals and recovery of truth have only been partial, not universal. Hence when Protestantism commenced, formality and deadness, as set forth in Sardis, soon followed, and there is a call to repent. The thick darkness of Romanism also remained. When Philadelphia commenced, what testimony there has been for God is surrounded by those two elements, Romanism and Protestantism, and Lao-

dicean lukewarmness follows, combined with imitation of what was and is of Him in Philadelphia, and strengthening more or less the elements of the other two. The state of things depicted in all four is, speaking broadly, that which characterises Christendom to-day, and will run on till Christ, the Lord Himself, shall deliver His true church out of it all, and take her to heavenly glory. That which is left will go to form Babylon the great (Rev. xvii.), and be judged as such (Sardis becomes infidel, as the world) at the hand of the Lord. (Rev. iii. 3.)

Having presented thus an outline of the history of the professing church viewed as seven lampstands, to shed the light during the absence of Christ on high, and the night of this world (Rom. xiii. 12), let us now seek to gather practical and profitable lessons from the details so graciously and faithfully given us of God.

First we would call our reader's attention to the fact that God's servant Paul, who had laboured so devotedly for the welfare of these assemblies, perceived clearly the decline which so soon set in, and in writing to his son in the faith, Timothy, tells him that "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." (2 Tim. i. 15.)

John is told by the One like unto the Son of man, to write to the angel of the church of Ephesus, saying, "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who *walketh* in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks [or lampstands]; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they

are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." (Chap. ii. 1-3.) The One in the midst of the lampstands was *walking* among them, observing all with His eyes as a flame of fire, taking note whether the light of God were upheld practically. Ephesus had been richly blessed. (Eph. i.) Paul had faithfully charged the elders of the assembly, warned them against evil both from without and from within, commending them to God and to the word of His grace. (Acts xx. 32.) His ministry had not been all in vain. When John wrote there was still much that the Lord could rejoice in. It is touching to notice how He approves all that He can before rebuking them. Nothing escapes His all-searching gaze. He knows everything about His assembly, in the unity of which His saints were gathered at Ephesus. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience [or endurance]." These things were precious to His heart, and He gladly recognises them. There was a holy shrinking, too, from evil. They could not bear those who were characterised by it. False apostles were working deceitfully for their moral ruin. But they put them to the test. And having tried these spirits (1 John iv. 1), they were found to be liars. And liars bring not Christ, but are emissaries of their master, Satan. Their part is with him in the lake of fire. (Rev. xxi. 8.) Moreover they had valued the great and holy *name* of their Master, and had endured and borne for its sake, without wearying. It is refreshing to note these moral traits at Ephesus which were

so well-pleasing to the Lord. Modern Christians would do well to pay heed, that we may be likewise characterised.

“ Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Ver. 4.) This is a painful verse. First love had waned. The Lord felt it, felt it deeply. The sense of His great love had awakened a true response in their affections and promised fruit sweet to His taste. But time always tests. He who looketh on the heart perceived the decline. It was serious. The works were there still, but the motive spring of all had weakened. *First* love had been left.

“ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” (Ver. 5.) “ Remember.” The Lord is faithful. Love approves, but love also rebukes. Love is jealous, and cannot tolerate slight. Love would not suffer its objects to sink below the level to which it had brought them. This is ever the true point of recovery. Ephesus is called upon therefore to remember from whence the fall had come, and to repent. Self-judgment is called for. If truly produced, if the heart were again awakened in response to His perfect love, return to *first* works, which He enjoins, would be the manifest evidence of it. This was His heartfelt desire, addressed to the angel representative of the Ephesian assembly. But if it were not heeded, they are warned of the solemn results. “ Else I will come unto thee ” (J. N. D. omits “ quickly ”), not for blessing, but for govern-

mental judgment. "I . . . will remove thy candlestick out of his place." The highly privileged assembly at Ephesus should no longer be a lampstand holding up the light for Him in that dark centre of Diana-worship. The masses, deceived by Satan, worshipped the image of a false goddess, said to be fallen from Jupiter. The Ephesian saints had been converted to the Christ of God, ascended to glory. They had witnessed to the truth, and from them the light had shone brightly in the midst of the surrounding darkness. But their departure from first love had called forth from the Lord this solemn threat. The lampstand would be removed. "*Except thou repent.*" As yet it was not too late.

One more thing is said of them. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." They had this good characteristic still. They hated Nicolaitane deeds, and were so far in full unison with Christ. He hated them also. Nicolaitanism refers to an evil that had commenced to manifest itself in the deeds of some at Ephesus, and that was afterwards held as a doctrine at Pergamos. We are not told what it signified, but it is thought to set forth the corruption of the grace of God. There were those who were turning it into dissoluteness. (See also Jude 4.) The abuse of grace is a grievous sin in the sight of God. The Lord expresses His hatred of the deeds, and joys to recognise the hatred of them by many at Ephesus also.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." (Ver. 7.) What the Lord says at the commencement of each epistle, the

Spirit confirms at the close. As we have seen, the Spirit is presented several times as seven Spirits, in accord with the character of the book. Here every one who has an ear is called upon to listen to His voice. Hence, whilst that which the Lord says refers more immediately to the local assembly, it is by the Spirit addressed *to the assemblies*. All seven assemblies, representative of the whole church during Christ's absence on high and the Spirit's presence here below, are addressed, and "He that hath an ear," wherever he may be, is called upon to hearken to His voice.

This exhortation is followed by a promise to the overcomer; or to the one who gets the victory through faith over the evil by which he is surrounded. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Ver. 7.) Here where we get the commencement of the fall of the church, we are reminded of the fall of man. He was banished from paradise lest he should eat of the tree of life, and live for ever in the state into which he had fallen through disobedience. Now to him who overcomes when the church has fallen, the Lord will give to eat of the tree of life in the paradise where Satan has never trodden, and never can, the paradise of *God* on high. Precious promise!

The same voice tells John to write next to the angel of the church in Smyrna, saying, "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." (Ver. 8.) In each epistle the Lord speaks of Himself in a character suited to the state of the assembly addressed. In Smyrna we find a

good deal about trial and suffering. The saints are reminded that the Lord is the first, before all that should test them in the short span of their life, and the last, when their trial should be over. And He Himself had *become* dead (for such is its force), having in one aspect died as a martyr, but lived again, and that for evermore. Hence He who exhorted them to faithfulness in a path of suffering was well able to support them, and to encourage them, having Himself trodden a path yet more trying than all.

“ I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” (Ver. 9.) In each of these seven epistles the Lord begins by saying “ I know thy works.” Everything is open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do. Nothing escapes His eye. He weighs the works of His people aright. And all will have to render account in a rapidly approaching day. He was fully cognizant too of their tribulation, and of their poverty. Many in those days of trial and persecution lost their all in this world. But many took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. And that was precious to Him. He cheers His poverty-stricken followers with the encouraging word “ but thou art rich.” They were poor in this world, but rich in relation to the world to come. They were rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom of heaven. And the Lord knew the blasphemy, or railing, of those around them which said they were Jews. But he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, whose praise is of men. He is a Jew

which is one inwardly, whose praise is of God. (Rom. ii. 29.) These men manifest themselves to be emissaries of Satan, railing against the truth and the people of God. *They say* that they are Jews. But the Lord says *they are not*, but a synagogue of Satan. The saints needed to be put on their guard, lest they should lose heart. These men might be of Jewish birth, but their synagogue religion was a mere pretence, and Satan was behind it all. It was deadly opposition to the testimony of God.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Ver. 10.) Though the saints at this period would have to suffer severely, whatever the things the devil should bring upon them through men, they were not to fear. The fear of man bringeth a snare. Some would be cast into prison; well, it was to put them to the proof. God would surely overrule it for their blessing. The trial of their faith would be much more precious than of gold which perisheth. (1 Pet. i. 7.) The period of their tribulation, ten days, is a limited one. Whatever happened, they were to be faithful. If it led to a martyr’s death, they were following Christ. They would meet God upon the other side. The Lord is faithful, and He would give them a crown of life. Suffering and death were the Christian’s road to life and abiding reward where death can never come.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh

shall not be hurt of the second death." (Ver. 11.) Again the Lord looks for an ear to hear the Spirit's voice. And a promise is made to the overcomer. There are two deaths: the death of the body in time, the second death for eternity—the lake of fire. This latter, prepared for the devil and his angels, shall not hurt the overcomer. If in faith he supports the suffering, and suffers martyrdom rather than deny Christ and the precious truth of God, then beyond all is bliss. Separation from God for him will be over for ever. The second death, the awful and eternal doom of the impenitent, will not hurt him. Precious promise! On the other hand, as the first death is not a cessation of existence, neither is the second. The lake of fire is the sphere to which all evil is relegated. Satan and his angels (Matt. xxv. 41); the beast and the false prophet (Rev. xix. 20); and whosoever is not found in the book of life shall be cast therein. (Rev. xx. 15.) Many different classes are enumerated. (Rev. xxi. 8.)

The third epistle is addressed to the angel of the church of Pergamos. "These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." The Lord takes the character of One who is prepared to interfere with authority and power on account of a state of things inimical to His rights. Satan having usurped the throne of this world, the Lord, shewing sympathy with His own, encourages them, saying again, "I know thy works," adding, "and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat [or throne] is;" that is, in the world. He is fully aware of the awful power and assumption of His and His people's great enemy, and rejoices to recognise, notwith-

standing, that a testimony is maintained for His glory. "Thou holdest fast *my* name, and hast not denied *my* faith." The claims of His holy and glorious name were held fast to, and His faith not denied, in spite of the outward displacement of His rule by the wicked one, and this in days when persecution again raged, on account of insubmission to Satanic authority, and in which one prominent man, named Antipas, was slain among them, where Satan dwelleth, and is distinguished as "my faithful martyr." Faithfulness in an evil day is always highly esteemed by the Lord.

But notwithstanding these rays of brightness at Pergamos, their general state calls for rebuke and warning. "But I have *a few things against thee*, because thou hast there *them* that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." (Ver. 14.) These grievous evils had found a place among them, a clear evidence of the working of Satan. There were those that held the doctrine of the false prophet Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, and cast a snare before God's privileged earthly people, the children of Israel. This snare had again been laid morally and deceitfully, and there were those who maintained this evil doctrine. Combined with it there was a lapse into idolatry, which God has so strictly forbidden both in the old and in the new economy. Sacrifices are due to God only, whether material or spiritual. Hence to eat things sacrificed to idols was to be identified with that which Satan set up to nullify

the true worship of God. This dreadful teaching incited to and condoned the committal of fornication.

Moreover, He adds, "So hast thou *also* them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate." (Ver. 15.) In the epistle to Ephesus, as we have seen, Nicolaitane deeds were rife, which the Lord hates. Here things had further lapsed, and there were those at Pergamos who *held the doctrine*. Evil doctrine is worse than evil deeds, as it leads to them and condones them.

In view of such grievous evils, He calls upon them, saying, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth." (Ver. 16.) Summary governmental judgment was threatened unless there were true self-judgment. The One who elsewhere speaks in accents of grace, gladly recognising all that is suited to God, is clothed with a priestly garb, discerning and discriminating between good and evil in the assemblies, ready to execute judgment where repentance was lacking.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." The hearing ear is again looked for, followed as before with a precious promise. He who gains the victory where Satan's throne is, and where he dwelleth, following and walking in the grace of the humbled Christ, now hidden in the heavens, should have Himself as the food of his soul,

both here and hereafter. He should also receive a special mark of His Lord's favour, figured by a white stone, engraven with a new name which he alone should know and enjoy in secret communion of heart.

The fourth assembly addressed was in the city of Thyatira. "Unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass." (Ver. 18.) This phase of the church's history corresponds with what even men call the dark ages. The Son of God, jealous for His own glory, discerning with piercing and all-searching gaze the fearful corruption in which the mass had sunk, is ready to tread His foes beneath His feet. Brass, as we have already remarked, is said to be the most unyielding of metals. Inexorable judgment will overtake the corrupted church at His appointed moment.

"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last [or thy last works] to be more than the first." (Ver. 19.) Again we find the glad recognition of things pleasing to the Lord. "I know thy works." And coupled with them there was the outflow of the Divine nature, charity, or love; acceptable service to God; faith in exercise in a day of evil; patience or endurance in an hour of great trial. And instead of carelessness and indifference through the opposition and oppression, leading to a decline in works, there was advance. The last were more than the first.

This is followed by a deeply solemn warning in

relation to a vast and corrupt system which had grown up in the professing church. "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

The Lord had a few things against Thyatira, as he had against Pergamos. Under the figure of "that woman Jezebel" (borrowed from the wicked and idolatrous wife of Ahab in the Old Testament) (1 Kings xvi. 31), He exposes the evil character of a vast system which had grown up professedly Christian, where all should have been suited to Him. She "calleth herself a prophetess." God had neither sent nor spoken by her. She arrogated to herself the right that her voice only should rule among God's people. She had displaced Christ speaking by the Spirit. Her teaching nullified the teaching of Christ. She led astray the Lord's servants, seducing them to commit spiritual fornication and idolatrous practices. The Lord gave her ample time to judge her wickedness, but she repented not. It is sad indeed to think of those whom He graciously calls "my servants" coming under such a terrible

corrupting influence. Those who succumb to her wiles and allurements are threatened with great tribulation, unless they too repent. "And her children will I kill with death." We take it that the children here spoken of refer to the corrupt principles and practices which proceed from Jezebel, the wicked parent stem, partaking more or less of the characteristics and lineaments of the mother. There is abundant testimony to prove that Jezebel is a striking figure of the overshadowing Roman Catholic system, in the zenith of its power and corruption in the middle ages, and other corruptions, her children, have been born of her.

All the assemblies shall know that the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, is He that searches the reins and the hearts. All things are open, naked, and manifest in the sight of Him with whom we have to do. And every individual shall receive from Him according to his works.

"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." (Vers. 24, 25.) It is precious to learn that whilst "Jezebel" was flaunting herself in wickedness, God had a people, in the Alpine districts of southern Europe and other parts, who sought His glory according to their light, who neither accepted her evil doctrine, nor knew the depths of Satan, "as they speak," that is, the boasted voice of those who called themselves "the church." The Holy Spirit, who dwells in the saints, searches the depths of God.

(1 Cor. ii. 10.) And these here addressed, *the rest* in Thyatira (for it is not two classes), were more or less under His blessed influence. The pressure involved in the maintenance of sound doctrine, and the refusal of Satan's false religious system was burden enough for the Lord's tried ones. He would put none other burden upon them. In suffering for His Name's sake they learnt practically that His yoke is easy, and His burden light. (Matt. xi. 30.) He concludes with the exhortation to hold fast what they had till He should fulfil the promise of His return. (Rev. xxii. 20.) Meanwhile they were learning that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy of being compared with the glory which shall be revealed in (or to) us. (Rom. viii. 18.)

In this fourth epistle, as remarked earlier, the promise to the overcomer comes before the exhortation, "He that hath an ear," etc. As time ran on, the evil in the professing church had become so great that the Lord no longer expects to find a hearing ear among the masses, but only among those who got the victory over Satan's power. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star." (Vers. 26-28.) The pressure on the Lord's people being so severe, the tendency would be to lose heart, and not to hold fast. In His grace, He encourages them to get the victory and to keep His works without flagging until the end. Things would

soon be reversed. The nations led on by Satan, and under Romish authority, might seek to overwhelm them, but ere long He would give the overcomer power over them. Powerless as they were of themselves to withstand the rod of iron rule emanating from Rome, the overcomer should soon wield the rod, and their foes be compelled to submit to them. They might be the most fragile of vessels in the potter's hands, but He would preserve them, and soon their persecutors should, as the vessels of a potter, be broken to shivers. "As I," or "as I *also* have received from my Father." All power has been given to Him by His Father in heaven and in earth. (Matt. xxviii. 18.) He had been rejected, but ere long He would return and take the kingdom. Those who had been privileged to share His sufferings at the hand of man would be associated with Him in the hour of His rule, when He should wield the iron rod, etc. "And I will give him the morning star." From this moment forth we get the harbinger of the coming day. Watchful saints during the dark night of this world should have Himself, the morning Star, as the Object of their heart's joy and hope. Much ignorance doubtless prevailed amongst the Lord's people. Nevertheless He Himself was the Object of their hearts, and whatever the measure of their intelligence, they looked for Him. As the bright and the morning Star, He would surely come for His own, in order to display them with Himself in the hour of His kingly reign.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

### CHAPTER III.

“AND unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.” (Ver. 1.) Sardis is said to signify “prince of joy,” or “song of joy,” or “that which remains.” This being so, it is in beautiful keeping, with that which took place in the professing church on earth at the period of its history here depicted, to which we will now refer. But first it is to be noticed, that our Lord presents Himself here as having the seven Spirits of God. The presence and action of the Holy Ghost, which is one chief characteristic of Christianity, had been almost wholly ignored through the declension and corruption which had set in. The Lordship of Christ had also been ignored and set aside, and human authority installed in its place. But now He reminds the church that He still hath the seven Spirits of God—presented in this sevenfold way, in accord with the character of the Revelation. Christ was about to act in sevenfold power by the Spirit in the recovery of truth and of saints for His own glory. He has also the seven stars, which, as we have seen, set forth the angels of the seven churches.

It is the moment when divine grace and power wrought, and the state of things ensued, which we usually speak of as Protestantism.

“I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” This appears to be the

Lord's estimate of the general state comprised under that name. Nominally, there is a further protest against the awful evil of Jezebel, with a profession of life, but the actual state is that of moral death. God's thoughts are not as ours. (Isa. lv. 8.) It bears the name of Protestantism among men, and life is professed. But, alas, though, as we shall see, the Lord owns a few, the mass are still in a state of *death*. This is the judgment of Him who has the seven spirits of God. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God." In this sphere, the mass, instead of watching, are immersed in the love of pleasure, the pursuit of wealth, and worldly politics. The things which still remained after God had wrought in power at the Reformation, and a measure of light had been given, and truth recovered in the midst of the dense darkness and general superstition, had not been strengthened. There have been occasional revivals, followed by repeated lapses. It is becoming more and more difficult to discern the line of demarcation between Romanism and Protestantism. Ritualism and infidelity have invaded the ranks of the latter far and wide, and "the things which remain" have been grievously weakened. The truly righteous are groaning on all hands at the inroads of evil which increase the state of moral death. The things that remain are indeed ready to die. The works of Protestantism are manifold and approved of many. The Lord's estimate is a very different one. They may appear perfect before men, but He has not found them *perfect before God*.

“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” Great things were received and heard at the Reformation, when God raised up His witnesses in different lands. There was a universal stir or movement. Nations broke away and refused “Jezebel’s” reign over the kings of the earth. Great light and blessing ensued, with emancipation of the human mind from Satanic thralldom, and liberty of thought in relation to things divine, and the privileges of nations. But how soon men have ceased to remember the gracious intervention of God, and have let go, instead of holding fast, walking in self-will instead of in self-judgment. “If therefore thou shalt not watch.” And has not the watch-tower been almost deserted? “I will come on thee as a thief.” Mark it well. The Lord here threatens Sardis with a fate similar to that which will overtake the world. (1 Thess. v. 2, 3; Rev. iii. 3.) Having dropped down to the world’s level, Sardis will have part in its judgment. The execution will be sudden, swift, and sure. “Thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” When they shall say, Peace and safety, then shall they be overtaken. The saints know perfectly how it will come. But the mass are in darkness and unbelief. “No man knoweth the day nor the hour.” As a *thief* He will come, unexpectedly, when men are lulled asleep morally by the wicked one. And He is strong who executeth His word.

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which

have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." (Ver. 4.) How precious to find in the midst of the above state of things a few names which have kept themselves pure! Each name is well-known to the Lord, inscribed upon His heavenly register. "Even in Sardis." It is a significant word. It shews how widespread is the dead condition of things we have been looking at. Yet *even* in Sardis there were a *few*. The Lord has His little flock, a sufficient witness for Himself, whether in Thyatira or in Sardis. These have kept their garments clean amid general defilement. And the Lord's eye is on them, His heart with them, and He encourages them with the blessed promise that they shall walk *with Him* in white. "*With me.*" Every one who values fellowship with Christ in separation from formal and worldly religion in this day shall enjoy blessed communion with Him in spotless purity in that day. "For they are *worthy.*" How great is the grace of the Lord! How deeply He appreciates in His saints that which answers to Himself! Though all is the fruit of His own blessed work in them, yet He ascribes worthiness to them, promising to reward them accordingly.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Here the victorious saint receives a threefold promise of encouragement. First, he shall be clothed with white raiment suited to the blessed company of a glorious Christ. Secondly, he is assured that his

name is written for ever in God's heavenly register of life by the One who will never blot it out. Professors with a name to live may, so to speak, inscribe their names therein, but they will find to their confusion that they never were inscribed by Him. Not so with the overcomer. Thirdly, the Lord will confess his name before His Father and His Father's angels. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. x. 32.) "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." (Luke xii. 8.) It is a second confirmation of our Lord's double promise when on earth.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

John is commanded to write a sixth time. "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write." Philadelphia signifies "Love of the brethren," a great characteristic of those who profit by the opened door which none can shut, of which the epistle speaks. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."

There can be no doubt but that this phase of the history of the church on earth has now long been entered upon. Some eighty years ago or so, the Lord spoke loudly to His people, as Protestantism pursued its formal and worldly course, and Roman Catholicism its gorgeous ritual and sad corruption. He presented Himself to the hearts and consciences of His people as the Holy One and the True. Holi-

ness and truth had been sadly set aside. But the Lord seeks and expects both in His saints, working in them with power by His Spirit to this end. Without holiness no man shall see Him (Heb. xii. 14); and the truth shall set us free. It is only as individual saints cultivate personal holiness, and as they walk in the truth (of which John, who pillowed his head on his Master's bosom, said he had no greater joy than that his children walked therein), that holiness and truth can characterise the assembly generally, in keeping with the character of the Holy One and the True. Nothing short of this satisfies His blessed heart.

"He that hath the key of David," etc. This is an allusion to Isaiah xxii. 20-25. Eliakim appears to be a figure of David, and David points to Christ. The prophet says, "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder. (Ver. 22.) The thought connected with a key is that of opening and shutting a door. So here. The day is at hand when the true David, his Son and his Lord, will open the door of blessing for God's earthly privileged people Israel. Meanwhile, He opens the door for heavenly people. We are privileged to come now beneath His sway, into whose hand the administration of the kingdom is given. He has the key, and commands the door. If He opens none can shut; if He shuts none can open.

"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." (Ver. 8.)

Again He saith, "I know thy works." Happy

indeed for those whose works He can approve in that day! "I *have* set before thee an open [or opened] door." Many of His saints have richly proved the truth of this blessed statement. He has opened the door, and He keeps it open, wide open, still. Demons and men have tried hard to close it. But every effort to do so has failed, and will fail. Wonderful are the privileges and liberty that His saints generally enjoy. Through their weakness and folly the enemy has scored many a success. The wolf has often scattered many of the sheep. But the door is still held wide open by the Lord's all-powerful hand, and all who seek His glory, walking in holiness and truth, are supported and sustained, the assaults of the enemy being powerless against them. Three things are said of them in His grace, which may not in themselves be anything to boast about, but they are very precious to His heart in this day of departure, corruption, and self-will. "For thou hast a little strength [or power], and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." The Lord delights to own all He can. If there is a little power, it is the fruit of His grace. If any keep His word, it is by the strength and wisdom which He bestows. If any have not denied His name, it is His preserving mercy, where so many have attached to it a thousand and one things which tend to its dishonour. But His eyes are never off those of His people who are characterised by these things, and His heart will ever be with them till the end.

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do

lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." (Ver. 9.) At the same time that the Lord raises up a testimony among His saints, where His holy and glorious name is not denied, the enemy raises up those who would counteract it by the boast of traditional religion and ecclesiastical status, with a revival of forms and ritual, more or less borrowed from Judaism. They are not of the synagogue of God but of *Satan*. They say they are Jews, but "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Rom. ii. 28, 29.) These characteristics are lacking. It is a mere imitation, Satanic in its origin. The Lord adds solemnly "they do lie." But the tables will soon be turned. Those who seek to answer now to the Holy One and the True may be despised for the moment. But, behold, the Lord will very soon make the formalists to come and do homage before their feet. In that day they shall know that the Lord has loved His own.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Ver. 10.) The Lord delights, too, to encourage His people. He waits in patience at God's right hand till the hour of His longsuffering and grace shall close. Meanwhile, the word of His patience is entrusted to His saints here below. In grace He recognises that His word has

been kept, and He encourages them with the promise that they shall be kept from (or out of) the hour of temptation (or trial) which shall come upon all the world. This trial extends far wider than the trouble of Jacob. (Jer. xxx. 7.) It will be world-wide. Christians, heavenly dwellers (Eph. ii. 6; Phil. iii. 20) will be kept out of it, but they that dwell upon the earth (earth dwellers) will be put to the test. This latter class is referred to several times in the course of the book of the Revelation. They appear to be those who after having professed Christianity, which is heavenly, have renounced it; and setting their mind on earthly things, settled down to dwell upon the earth. They never knew and responded to the call of God, which leads to the maintenance of a stranger and pilgrim character on earth, in view of heavenly glory.

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Ver. 11.) The coming of the Lord is an integral part of the precious gospel. The present state of things is fleeting and temporary. The Lord is coming back, and quickly. All will then be changed. It is a blessed promise. Turning elsewhere for detail, we find that two great facts are connected with His return. First He will come *for* His own, secondly, He will come *with* them. (1 Thess. iv. 15-18; Col. iii. 4.) Here it is evidently that by His coming *for* them, they will be delivered from (or out of) the universal hour of trial. We shall be translated by divine power to be with Himself on high, before the day of trial and judgment shall ensue. The last act of His grace toward us will be to transfer us to

glory. This may happen at any moment. (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) In view of His quick return, we are exhorted to hold fast that which we have. We have great privileges. God has revealed much precious truth to His people. But it is very easy to let it go. Both demons and men will rob us of it, if possible, and take our crown. Let us therefore pay earnest heed to our Lord's injunction, "Hold that fast," that both the truth and the crown may indeed be ours.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh<sup>1</sup> down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." (Ver. 12.) In looking into this remarkable and blessed fivefold promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia, it is to be specially noticed that all is connected with God Himself, and hence probably that its fulfilment is not limited to the age to come. Commencing with a promise which would appear to point to the kingdom in display, it carries the thoughts on to the age of ages, when God shall make all things *new*. (Rev. xxi. 5.) Standing on either side of the entrance to the temple of Solomon, there were two remarkable pillars, which could not fail to strike the attention of any one who entered. One was called "Jachin," which signifies, "He shall establish," and the other "Boaz," "In him is strength." This is here taken up figuratively. The overcomer, who has a little strength, keeping the Lord's word, and not denying His name, shall

have a prominent position in God's temple in the coming day. Even in Paul's day James, Cephas and John seemed to be pillars morally (Gal. ii. 9), and in the hour of testimony here we are called to forsake all that would naturally entrap us, whether in the world or in the professing church, and to go forth unto Jesus without the camp, bearing His reproach. But in that day the overcomer shall go in, there to abide with the Lord, and "shall go no more out." Despised now for his Master's sake, and oft treated by those who profess orthodoxy and claim privilege in connection with God's name, as though they were an outside people who had no part nor lot in the matter, in that day the tables will be reversed, and the Lord Himself will write the name of His God upon His saints. They shall be fully owned of Him. "And the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." It is here that we get a promise extending beyond the coming age. The holy city, "the city of my God," is here styled "*new*" Jerusalem, an appellation only employed in relation to the age of ages, when He makes all things new. (Rev. xxi. 2.) During the thousand years of the reign of Christ it is styled the "holy" Jerusalem, but the word "*new*" is not employed. Four things characterise the city, which is a figure of the church; it is the city of God, where He dwells; it is entirely new, created by His power; its origin is heavenly, and its source is divine. The name of this glorious city shall be inscribed on the overcomer. Lastly, it adds, "and my new name." This special favour crowns the promised blessing.

The Lord's new name shall be written upon every saint who gains the victory. Lastly, we would call attention to the repetition in these gracious promises to the word "my." It is repeated five times, and refers to the holy intimacy which will be the portion of the faithful believer in relation to God in the blessed sphere and circumstances into which he will then be introduced.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (Ver. 14.) In this seventh epistle is given to us the last phase of the professing church on earth. The Lord presents Himself in a threefold way. First, as "the Amen." It is the close of that which He has to say to the church in these seven messages, and is irrevocable. All that He saith must surely be fulfilled. Secondly, whatever may be the moral character of the church, He Himself is the faithful and true Witness. This was proved in His sojourn here. He was faithful and true even unto death. He witnessed a good confession and glorified God. He expects to see the reflex of Himself in the church. But, alas, the church has failed, and in the epistle to the angel of the church at Laodicea He can only counsel and rebuke, though still giving time to repent. Thirdly, He is the beginning of the creation of God. This is the position that He occupies according to God in relation to that which He created. And notwithstanding all that has befallen creation through the

power of Satan and the will of man, with all the terrible fruits of sin, the Lord presents Himself as the true moral beginning in addressing the angel of the church of the Laodiceans.

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Again the Lord says “I know thy works.” And He depicts what the moral condition of Laodicea is, “Neither cold nor hot.” He would rather they should be one or the other. The cold formality of a Sardis state would be better than theirs. He would rather that there should be the heat of Philadelphia. But their condition was *lukewarm*. When questions of such momentous issue are at stake, lukewarmness is nauseous to the Lord. Indifferent neutrality, after His long patience, is insufferable. “I am about to spue thee out of my mouth.”

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Ver. 17.) What a pitiable state indeed to be in! The church which professes to follow Christ, the poor and needy Man, in the hour of His absence and rejection, boasting in her wealth and self-sufficiency without Him. “Need of nothing”! When such language characterises the church, its estate must be low indeed. After the recovery of light and truth in such a wondrous way as set forth in Philadelphia, such departure and independence are unutterably sad. A state of moral insensibility to the glory and claims of Christ had

come in, so that deceived by Satan and by their own hearts, all sense of their true moral condition was lost. The conscience had become utterly blunted. The self-satisfaction reigning could not hide their wickedness and misery. Their boasted wealth did not deceive the Lord as to their poverty. Professing to see, they had become blind, and without moral sense to discern good and evil. They were naked in the eyes of the Lord.

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” (Ver. 18.) Alas, how few lend their ear to this good counsel of the Lord! It is not yet too late to buy true gold. Gold sets forth divine righteousness. Laodicea boasted of its possession. The Lord knows the spiritual poverty that exists. But ere judgment shall overtake the existing evil, He offers “gold,” gold that has been under the action of fire, and refined. “Buy of me.” It is Christ Himself, the righteousness of God, that Laodicea lacks. Submitting to, and finding their all in Him, and living Christ in practical righteousness, they would be truly rich. No heavy price is needed. All the price is paid. Christ Himself bore the judgment of God; He was tried by fire. It only manifested His infinite perfection. And He, “of God is made unto us . . . righteousness.” (1 Cor. i. 30.) And he that practiseth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. (1 John iii. 7.)

“White raiment” too is offered, that their naked

state might be covered and that they might be clothed fitly before His eye, and to walk with Him. "Buy of me." "And anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." There was yet time to escape their blind condition. Heavenly eyesalve is at their disposal. If exercised, they would surely see. If they paid heed to His counsel by anointing themselves, light from Him by the Holy Ghost would fill their souls. Gold to meet their moral poverty, white raiment to cover their nakedness, and eyesalve to remove their blindness, all was there. Graciously He calls attention to His heavenly and spiritual wares. "I counsel thee to buy *of me*." Who else indeed can supply them but Christ?

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Ver. 19.) Nothing can weaken or change the Lord's love to as many as are truly His. The proof of it is that in faithfulness He rebukes and chastens (or disciplines) them. It is thereby that the Lord's people forsake evil and walk in holiness, without which none shall see Him. (Heb. xii. 14.) He looked for zeal, not lukewarmness and indifference. And repentance, the judgment of self and of careless ways, that there might be a true response to His love.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Ver. 20.)

The word "behold" in scripture is used to arrest the attention. A word of deep moment follows here. It is different from anything that we have hitherto in the history of the professing church.

The Lord Himself takes an outside place. Such indifference and self-satisfaction reign within that He cannot lend His blessed presence to Laodicea in that state. He stands at the door—*outside!* Solemn thought. But His heart still loves His people. He lingers to the last moment: and He knocks. Is there an ear inside in the midst of all the lukewarmness and self-sufficiency anointed to catch the sound of that knock of love? Is there a heart there to respond? “If *any* man *hear my* voice.” The voice of the Lord outside. “And open the door.” Think of it! *a door between* the Lord and any of His own where lukewarmness reigns supreme. To open that door there must be both faith and love in exercise. And what is the Lord’s blessed promise for any one who does? “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” It is threefold. The Lord will come to that one, that he may realise His blessed presence. And He will sit down, as it were, to feast with him. And such an one shall sit down also to feast with Him. How deeply precious! What blessed holy intimacy, for any soul that in the midst of the nauseous failure of Laodicea wakes up from its lethargy, and responding to his Lord’s importunity, hearkens to His voice, and makes way for Him to enter.

“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.” (Ver. 21.) This last promise to the overcomer is nothing like so rich as that in the Philadelphian epistle. Yet is it a very precious word of encouragement. At

the present moment Christ, refused His throne here, has gone on high, and has taken His rightful seat with His Father in His throne. Ere long He will reappear with power. He will take His own throne and reign supreme in heaven and in earth. In that day He promises that the overcomer shall sit with Him in His throne. He will grant him this great favour, giving him to share with Him in His glorious administration of the kingdom.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

This closes the seven epistles. But before leaving this subject, we would call our readers attention to a point of extreme importance to which we have already briefly referred, which, though doubtless familiar to many students of the Revelation, has probably not been apprehended by others. We have sought to shew that the decline of the church entrusted to man down here, from the moment when Ephesus leaves her first love, culminates in the state of things portrayed in the fourth epistle to Thyatira, “that woman Jezebel,” setting forth Romanism. Then follows Sardis, in which we get Protestantism. Philadelphia with a recovery of truth, and a people to it, the coming day revealing those who have answered to it. Laodicea is a sad lapse from light and truth to lukewarmness and indifference. This being so, it is of the utmost importance to remark that when Protestantism commenced, Romanism did not end, but henceforth they are found concurrently in the world. When the truth was more fully recovered, as set forth in Philadelphia, the response was found in the midst

of Protestantism, though a few hearts have also responded from the latter. The sad lapse set forth in Laodicea has come and is on the increase, and the former two still continue, but, thank God, there are many still, and we doubt not will be to the end, who are seeking with exercise to respond to the truth recovered in Philadelphia. These four elements compose the Christendom of *to-day*.

Shortly, as we have seen, the Lord will come for all His own, wherever they may be found. The true church having been translated to glory, the false one will in various ways come into the richly deserved judgment of God. At the judgment seat (or bar) of Christ the saints shall be arraigned before Him to render an account. For them, there is *no criminal* judgment. We shall stand before Him, in His own perfection, but we shall be fully manifested in His holy presence, to be approved and rewarded according to our faithfulness, and to receive according to His promises, if we have overcome in the professing church.

Romanism figured, as we have seen, by Jezebel, is viewed finally as Babylon the great, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. (Chap. xvii.) Her solemn judgment is portrayed in chapter xviii. The threat against Protestantism in Sardis is similar to the threat against the world, namely, that if repentance and watchfulness still lacked, the Lord would come on her suddenly, as a thief. (Rev. iii. 3; I Thess. v. 2.) Laodicea is viewed as being spued out of His mouth. Those who compose the synagogue of Satan in Philadelphia will be compelled to come and do homage before the saints. (Rev. iii. 9.)

## CHAPTER IV.

WE have been looking in chapters iii. and iv. at the history of God's assembly on earth, viewed as lampstands (or light bearers), and connected with man's responsibility. At the opening of chapter iv. the scene is translated from earth to heaven. We find a remarkable vision of God's throne in heaven and the heavenly saints around it, viewed as elders. This clearly involves the removal of the saints from earth to heaven, although there is no mention made of it in the passage itself.\* In 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-18 we get a marvellous description of the sudden and secret rapture of the heavenly saints. Those who have fallen asleep through Jesus are raised, and those who are alive and remain on earth till that moment of our Lord's return, being changed (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52), all are caught up together to meet Him in the air. (1 Thess. iv. 15-18.) There is no doubt but that Laodicea, the last phase of the church on earth, is present, and hence this marvellous event may be fulfilled at any moment, non-converted professors being left behind to come into judgment on earth. (Matt. xxv. 1-13; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.) In the Book of the Revelation we do not get our reception by Christ in view of our introduction into the place prepared in the Father's house. That promise came from His own blessed lips in John xiv. But here all is portrayed in relation to

\* It is implied in Revelation iii. 10-11.

the revelation of Jesus Christ and His coming kingdom and glory. It is a different line of truth.

Before entering into the detail of this chapter it will be helpful to notice the remarkable connection of verse 1 with the third clause of chapter i. 19. "The things which thou hast seen" refer to the vision of One like unto the Son of man in chapter i.; "the things which are," to the history of the church on earth in chapters ii., iii. The third clause adds, and "the things which shall be *hereafter*." This word hereafter scarcely conveys the thought of the original, which is more definite. It signifies "*after these*." We have already referred to this in dwelling upon chapter i. 19, but would impress it upon our readers as all-important, in order to rightly apprehend the division of the book. Now turn to chapter iv. 1 and you will find the same words twice repeated. "*After this* I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard [chap. i. 10] was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (or, *after these*). Chapters iv., v. indeed shew us what will transpire in heaven after the ways of God (except in the execution of judgment) have ceased as to the *professing church on earth*.

John looked, and saw above him a door opened *in heaven*. The voice of chapter i. invites him up, and promises to shew him the things which *must* be after these which he had already seen. He is to come up and to behold the scenes following from the point of view of the One who speaks.

Clearly he could not respond in his own power.

But the power of God was present. Hence it adds, "Immediately I was *in the spirit*." To be in the Spirit was needful for him to see, and for us also if we would enter into God's thoughts. Spiritual things are spiritually understood. (1 Cor. ii. 10-16.) "Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." "A throne was set." It is God's throne in relation to the creation and government of the world. It is "in heaven." The whole administration will proceed from above. The throne is occupied. No name is mentioned, but in verse 8 the One on the throne is celebrated as "Lord God Almighty." He whom John beheld was in appearance like two brilliant, precious stones, the jasper and the sardine. And round about the throne was a rainbow like to an emerald. As God was about to renew His dealings and relations with the earth in a more public way than during the absence of Christ, He graciously allows John to see that wonderful rainbow, reminding him of His covenant with the earth, after He had destroyed the world with a flood. Judgment was again about to ensue, though it would partake of another character, but God had not forgotten His covenant, and in the midst of the execution of judgment will surely remember mercy.

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold." The

introduction of the four and twenty elders is a matter of the deepest interest. It has often been pointed out that the original word translated "seats" really signifies "thrones." It appears as though the translators thought that the elders represented saints, and with a mistaken humility would put them in a less exalted place in relation to the throne of God. The idea connected with elders would be intelligence and experience, etc. The Apostle Paul speaks of saints having the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. ii. 16.) And the prophet saith of all His own, they shall be taught of the Lord. (Isa. liv. 13.) Now, if you turn to 1 Chronicles xxiv., you will find that in the families of the sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, the lot for the ordering of the service in the house of the Lord, according to the commandment of the Lord God of Israel, fell upon twenty-four. No doubt the number of twenty-four elders is derived from these courses of the priesthood in Israel. In all probability the twenty-four elders represent the sum of the heavenly priesthood (as we have already remarked) in relation to God's throne, inclusive of the saints of both the Old and New Testament in their glorified condition. A kingdom of priests, in accord with Revelation i. 6, they are viewed in heaven (after the accomplishment of 1 Thess. iv. 15-18)\* in priestly,

\* To confirm these statements, it would be well to point out that at the coming of the Lord for His own (1 Thess. iv. 15-18), when the dead saints are raised, and the living ones changed, and all together caught up to meet Him in the air, the Old Testament saints are included. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life,"

garb, white raiment, crowned with gold in divine righteousness. Moreover, they are viewed as seated in the divine presence, which conveys the thought of perfect divinely-given suitability for that wondrous position of favour and rest before God.

Another deeply instructive point in relation to this marvellous vision is, that this richly blessed company of saints are seen in their kingly and priestly character glorified, and enthroned, not only before the commencement of the execution of the judgments of God upon the world, but before even the symbols of judgment are mentioned in connection with His holy throne! "The Lord will give grace and glory." (Psa. lxxxiv. 11.) The last act of grace is to bring the saints to glory. Believers come not into judgment. (John v. 24.) Hence, as Enoch was removed by divine power before the flood (Heb. xi. 5), and Lot rescued before the destruction of the cities of the plain, so also all God's saints, at the eve of His threatened judgments on the earth, will be translated from this world, and safely housed on high. This event takes place before God's throne of grace becomes a throne of judgment. Faithful is He that promised, who also will do it.

Next we get the symbols of judgment. "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." (Ver. 5.) Nothing is more sudden

&c. (John v. 21-29.) Again, "They that are Christ's at his coming." (1 Cor. xv. 23.) The Old Testament saints, though not part of the church, the bride of Christ, are heavenly saints. (See Heb. xi. 13-16.)

and searching than the effects of lightnings; nothing more awful and solemnizing than mighty thunders; nothing more calculated to arrest the attention than the voices of invisible speakers. Hence nothing is more suited to impress us with the deep solemnity of the judgments shortly to follow. The seven lamps of fire, which represent in the vision the seven Spirits of God, would denote not only the plenitude of the action of the Holy Ghost in relation to His dealings with the world, but also its exposing and searching character. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Eph. v. 13.) "Our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. xii. 29.) Everything will be fully exposed, and nothing hid, when judgment goes forth from the throne of the Holy One.

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind." (Ver. 6.) This imagery is taken from the temple of Solomon. Therein, near to the shrine, was a molten sea, supported on twelve oxen, which contained water for the ceremonial washing of the priests, and there were also lavers for the washing of the burnt offering. (2 Chron. iv. 2-6.) But before the throne of God on high there was a sea of glass like unto crystal. Entirely separate from this world of sin, there will be no need of washing there. The sea itself is perfectly transparent. It appeared to the eyes of the favoured prophet as glass, like unto pure crystal, carrying with it the thought of fixed holiness and purity.

Next he beheld four beasts. It is to be regretted that the English translation is not more correct. It is well known that the Greek word signifies "living creature" rather than beast. Four living creatures appeared in the midst and round about the throne, utterly unlike any that John had hitherto seen. Being seen in the midst of the throne as well as around, shews their intimate connection with Him who sat upon it. And being full of eyes before and behind would indicate intense perception and discernment both towards the external scene around and as to the workings of the throne from within. Nothing escapes the gaze of Him with whom we have to do.

"And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." The four creatures thus so wondrously represented denote the four chief heads of this lower creation. God's throne is established in connection with His rule and government, and both man and beast come within the sphere of its operations. A lion would set forth majesty, dominion and power; a calf, patience and endurance; a face as a man, wisdom and intelligence; a flying eagle, rapidity and suddenness. All these things characterise the action of God's throne. It is further to be noticed, in relation to this scene, that there is no mention of the angelic hosts. But no doubt that which is set forth in the four living creatures symbolically is here carried out by angelic administration.

"And the four beasts [or 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." (Ver. 8.) In Ezekiel i. we have a wonderful description of four living creatures, and there is a remarkable analogy between them and those mentioned in Revelation iv. But there are also differences. The same symbols are mentioned, but each had four faces—of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. They appear to have been cherubic in character, having each *four* wings. (Ver. 23.) They ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. (Ver. 14.) The noise of their wings was like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, *as the noise of an host*, etc. (Ver. 24.)

In Isaiah vi. we get seraphims in connection with the throne of the Lord, and each has six wings. Hence the living creatures in Revelation iv. having six wings would seem to point also to their seraphic character, in which are found holiness and mercy combined. Further, they not only had eyes before and behind, but it is added now "*within*," setting forth the inward perception and intelligence by which those represented are characterised. They are occupied unceasingly, like those of Isaiah vi., in ascribing holiness to Him who sat on the throne. They rest not day and night, which again indicates that the throne is established in relation to the things of time, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, or, Jehovah Elohim Shaddai. We learn here who the One is in verses 2, 3, like to a jasper and a sardine stone. And He was, He is, and He is

to come, the eternal One. It is the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity.

“And when those beasts [or living creatures] give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders 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.” Moreover the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to the enthroned One, who liveth for ever and ever, language concerning Him which is repeated in the verse following. The four and twenty elders, or heavenly saints, hitherto seated at rest in His holy presence, now prostrate themselves before Him, and worship Him, and cast their crowns before the throne. All in heaven bow before the presence of the divine Majesty. It is to be noted that there is no song as yet. That is reserved until the Lord appears on the scene as the Lamb, in His character of Redeemer, as we shall see in the chapter following. But here the elders say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power.” The language they use confirms the thought that the saints are in view. It would be presumption on the part of angels, blessed ministering spirits as they are, to address the Lord thus. But it is the privilege of saints to say and sing now as in heaven, “*Thou art worthy.*” The living creatures give glory, honour, thanks. The elders say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive

glory and honour and power." They say it on the eve of His taking His power manifestly. And who is He? The Creator; the Lord God Almighty. It is the Creator who is about to reign. "Thou hast created all things." The Lord Himself called all into existence. All things were created by Him. (Gen. i. 1; John i. 3; Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2.) "And for thy pleasure they are [or were] and were created." All the heavenly saints in glory shall own that all things that compose the glorious creation, which has been marred by the entrance of sin, were created by the Lord, were for His pleasure so long as they remain, and were created to that end.

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## CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER V. is a continuation of the scene we have been dwelling upon. "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals." It was the usual custom in those days to write only on one side of a book or roll, and to seal it with one seal. But John saw in the right hand of the occupant of the throne a roll of exceptional character. It overflowed with writing, being covered both within and without, and it was sealed with a perfect number of seals, namely, seven. The right hand of Him who sat was all powerful to execute its contents.

"And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." (Vers. 2, 3.) Angels excel in strength. With a loud voice, so that all may hear, this strong angel makes a wide sounding proclamation. "Who is worthy to open the book [or roll], and to lose the seals thereof?" Tremendous issues depend on the reply. But no man (or one) in heaven, or earth, or underneath the earth, was able to open it, or even to look upon it. Not a creature was found worthy, in the whole of this sphere on heaven, earth, etc.

This sad fact produced great sorrow of heart in

John. "And I wept much, because no man [or one] was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon." No one had been *found* worthy, not even amongst the most true and devoted servants of God. The words "and to read" are an interpolation. They are not found in the original. Well might John weep that there was not one found worthy even to look upon the roll.

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." (Ver. 5.) The elders, representing, as we have seen, the heavenly saints, are characterised by intelligence. Whilst on earth, through the presence of the Spirit in them, they entered into the thoughts of God. Now seated in glory round God's throne, they enter intelligently into His mind. And one of them, telling John not to weep, calls his attention to One who had overcome so as to open it, which is the force of the passage. Who is it? The elder says two things of Him. He is the Lion of the tribe of Juda, and He is the Root of David! Who else could this be but Christ Himself? Our Lord sprang out of Juda. (Heb. vii. 14.) And as the Lion He will roar when He takes the prey. (Amos iii. 4.) He is not only David's Son according to the flesh, but He is also David's Lord, the Root as well as the Offspring. The elder testifies that He had prevailed both to open the roll and to break its seven seals.

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the

throne and of the four beasts [or living creatures], and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." (Vers. 6, 7.) Being invited to do so, John beheld. But instead of seeing the One of whom the elder spake, in either or both of the characters to which he referred, he beheld Him in quite another. He saw a Lamb. *In the midst* of the throne, of the living creatures, and of the elders, in the very central position, Christ appeared. There stood a Lamb as it had been slain. Though He is the Lion and the Root, it was not thus that He overcame. All that is true of Him thus must most surely be fulfilled. But He is also a Lamb, the Lamb of God. As such, crucified through weakness, He went into death. John beholds Him, the risen One, in glory, a Lamb as it had been slain. He *stands* there (for He is about to open the roll of the judgments and mysteries of God), bearing upon His holy Person the tokens of His passion, the wounds which He received in the house of His friends, the marks of death. "A Lamb *as it had been slain.*" He is there in the midst of God's holy throne as the One who wrought eternal redemption, the alone worthy One, the mighty Overcomer, the fore-ordained Lamb, and He is surrounded by all the heavenly intelligences in God's glory. Having glorified God on earth, and settled the whole question of sin, He is found and recognised worthy to take the book and to break the seals. "Having

seven horns and seven eyes" shew that the perfection of power and authority, wisdom, discernment, etc., are His. From Him proceed the activities of the Spirit of God. The seven eyes are the seven Spirits of God. In this sevenfold way, in accord with the character of this wondrous book as we have already remarked, the Spirit of the Lord acts in power and administration, being sent forth into all the earth. The whole comes thus under the Lord's judgment and government. The worthy One took the roll from the right hand of the enthroned One.

But before he loosed either of the seals thereof, which act is found at the commencement of the sixth chapter, we read, "When he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials [or bowls] full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." (Ver. 8.) The moment when the Lamb takes the roll is the signal for universal movement, joy and praise. Note first a change which has been pointed out by others. Here for the first time the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders are grouped together, falling down before the Lamb. It has been thought, and we judge rightly so, that the significance of this is, that the moment when the One who obtained eternal redemption commences to exercise His power openly in connection with the things given into His hand, the saints (set forth in the elders), being associated with Him, henceforth commence to share with Him in the administration, as the age (or world) to come is not put in

subjection to angels. (Heb. ii. 5.) So then that which appears to be angelic in Revelation iv. is saintly in chapter v. and on, and, as we shall see shortly, from this moment forth the angels are seen standing in a circle outside.

Now every one of them has a harp and golden vials (or bowls). In reading this, and many other passages, we must bear in mind the figurative character of the book. This glorious company is seen in a priestly character. They worship God, and present the prayers of the saints, which are a sweet incense before Him. This requires explanation. Nothing can be clearer than that after the translation of the heavenly saints to glory, there will be a fresh dealing of God with man on earth. The glad tidings of grace and glory will then be no longer proclaimed. But God will raise up a remnant of Jews to testify that the rejected Christ is the true Messiah, and that He will appear to the discomfiture and judgment of His foes, and the establishment of His kingdom. (Rev. vi. 9-11; Matt. xxv. 31-46; Rev. xi. 3-13.) They will announce the glad tidings of the kingdom—the everlasting gospel—and call on men to fear God. (Matt. xxiv. 14; Rev. xiv. 6, 7.) God will work in power, and many will be blessed, especially amongst those outside the sphere now known as Christendom. (Rev. vii. 9-17.) Many will be tried and some suffer martyrdom. (Rev. vi. 9-11.) It is these saints, whose prayers will be as sweet incense in the golden bowls, presented before God by the previously translated heavenly saints. Those who die or are martyred during Daniel's last week, or the

seven years of the covenant, will have part in the *first* resurrection. (Rev. xx. 4.) Their resurrection takes place at the close of this short period. (Rev. xx. 6.) Many others will be preserved (both Jew and Gentile) for millennial blessing on earth. (Rev. vii. 1-17; xiv. 1-5.) We shall have to refer to these varied companies again as we seek to further unfold the contents of this book.

“And they sung 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 tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” (Vers. 9, 10.) It is evident that the translators failed to catch the true signification of the passage. The force of the original is very different. The latter part should be rendered, “Thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth.” Several things characterise the singers. They are filled with joy. They know and own the Lamb’s worthiness. They are deeply interested in what is taking place. They are intelligent as to the widespread effects of redemption. They sing a new song. It goes on, and it is an entirely *new* one. No such song has ever been *sung* in heaven before. The first mention of singing in scripture is when God’s people Israel were redeemed out of Egypt. Man needs redemption in order to sing. Till then, his fallen and guilty estate before God precludes

acceptable song. The only other creatures spoken of in scripture as singing are the morning stars, who sang at the creation. (Job xxxviii. 7.) The sons of God are spoken of as shouting for joy, and angels cry aloud, ascribe glory, and say, but are not spoken of as singing.

The language of the opening of the song again confirms the thought that the singers, the living creatures and elders now grouped together, are the saints. No others are privileged to express themselves in such intimate language to the holy Lamb of God as "Thou art worthy." What a beautiful response to the loud-voiced proclamation of the angel in verse 2, "Who is worthy?" And angels and every creature, as we shall see, voice and re-echo it to the utmost bound of creation. There is no discordant note. The saints in glory, in virtue of redemption, sing the worthiness of the Lamb, the Redeemer, to take the roll and to open its seals. They give an intelligent reason why. "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God." As we have seen, the word "us" has been introduced mistakenly. They are not occupied with themselves, nor with their own redemption. Their presence there on thrones as a kingly, priestly company, in their glorified state, is a manifest witness to the fact. They are the heavenly trophies of the victory of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Occupied with Him, they sing His praise, and celebrate the redemption of others. They recognise that it is *to* God, and by Christ's blood alone. They acclaim the redemption of another company out of *every* tribe, tongue, people, and

nation. All is in view of the establishing of His kingdom.

Moreover they recognise that this fresh company is also made kings and priests unto *our* God; and they shall reign, not on, but over the earth. A careful study of Revelation xx. 6, coupled with verses 4 and 5, and Revelation vi. 10, 11, will amply repay the trouble, and help to clear the reader on this point. As already said, the company consists of those who died in the Lord (Rev. xiv. 13), or are martyred after the heavenly saints are glorified, and before He appears to reign. There is clearly, so to speak, a supplementary resurrection, which is included in the thought of *the first*, as distinct from *the second*, which is that of *the dead* only. (Rev. xx. 5, 6.) Raised just before the manifestation of the King of kings, they live and reign also with Him. Apart from these interesting and instructive scriptures, we should not know what would become of the saints of Daniel's last week of seven years, except those who die not, but are preserved for blessing in the earthly sphere of the kingdom.

"*They shall reign over the earth.*" In the age to come, the dispensation (or administration) of the fulness of times, God is going to gather (or head up) in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him. (Eph. i. 10.) It is clear from this and many other scriptures that there is both a heavenly and an earthly sphere in the coming kingdom. The heavenly saints will reign with Christ in heaven *over* the earth (Rev. v. 10—Gr.), and this new company,

shall have part therein. Israel, converted and restored, and Gentile nations shall be blessed on the earth.

How precious for the christian heart to contemplate and consider this glorious scene! Every one who partakes of God's grace now will share in the glory then. All will form part of that heavenly choir, singing the new song, "Thou art worthy," etc. At any moment our Lord Himself may return for His own, and introduce us there.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying 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. v. 11, 12.) Next John beholds the angelic hosts, who serve from God's throne, and who had ministered to the heirs of salvation during the hour of Christ's rejection and absence on high. They stand, an innumerable company, around the throne, *i.e.*, in an outer circle. What joy for them to behold as their Head the Lamb as if had been slain, in the midst of the heavenly throne, and surrounded by all the trophies of His victory, crowned and robed and enthroned, prostrating themselves before Him, and singing to His praise. No envy at the near place and the rich blessing enjoyed by His saints ever enters the hearts of these blessed, willing, and holy ministering spirits. Gladly they carry on the strain of joy. No angel, as no saint, refuses to join in the praise.

They sing not, "Thou art worthy," but gladly and with a loud voice they say, "Worthy is the Lamb." And like the saints, they acclaim Him who bears the marks of death upon His person as the Lamb that was slain. Great as was the glory of God's Son in creation, greater still does it shine forth in redemption. Unfathomable and inscrutable love is centred there! Men talk of the wonders of the world, but the death of God's Son on Calvary is the wonder of wonders before which every other wonder completely and utterly pales!

Well may these happy myriads with one loud voice proclaim the Lamb worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, blessing. This sevenfold ascription embraces all that His people Israel and the world denied Him here below. Yea, more. There was not only the refusal of all these things, which were His just due, but, alas! all combined to accord Him the very opposite. "Power?" Man treated Him as a feeble impostor, a false King. Externally, as said elsewhere of Him, He was as a worm, and no man. (Psa. xxii. 6.) Any miracle which they could not deny, was attributed to Satan, and not to God. The manger, the path, the cross all witness to the darkened mind of man that He was powerless. "Riches?" Was He not the poor and needy man; was He not the carpenter of Nazareth? Had the Son of man where to lay His head? Had He not to procure a coin from a fish to pay tribute? But, blessed be His name, did He not become poor that we might be rich? "Wisdom?" Why, the wise of this world treated His doctrine as utter folly. Was not Christ crucified

a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greek? (1 Cor. i. 22-29.) Nay, the proud heart and mind, apart from a divine work, cannot brook, that from the highest to the lowest, the eternal salvation of each depends wholly and solely on Christ and His precious blood! "Strength?" Was He not crucified through weakness? Was He not apparently powerless to escape from the bitter gibe, the cruel blow, the shameless mockery of the religious and of the ungodly? Men taunted Him that He could not save Himself and come down from the cross. "Honour?" Was not every mark of deep and dark dishonour heaped upon that blessed holy brow? Were not even ordinary courtesies of life refused Him? Was He not buffeted, bruised, spit upon? Was He not falsely charged, falsely condemned, compelled to carry His own cross, and crucified without the gate between two thieves? "Glory?" Angels ascribed it at His birth (Luke ii. 13, 14), but not men. Shame, cruel shame, was His lot in the world of the falsely religious and of the ungodly. Moral glory shone throughout, but man would not recognise it. And nothing but crucifixion on a cross of shame would satisfy their wicked and bloodthirsty hearts. Every kind of shame and wickedness surrounded Him at the hand of man at that awful hour. "Blessing?" He was the curse of the wicked. He began His ministry with blessing, but was treated as an impostor with cursing by the mass, and was compelled by their persistent opposition and hatred to close it with "Woe." In patient grace He allowed Himself to be taken by wicked hands, crucified and

slain, voluntarily bearing the curse of the broken law on the tree, to which those who put Him there exposed themselves.

But, oh, how deeply blessed to see the great change in this glorious vision! He who received the opposite at the hands of man, is owned with one accord by the mighty angelic hosts as worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, blessing. All were His by divine right, and all will be His both in the coming age, and to all generations of the age of ages.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” (Vers. 13, 14.) Here the strain of praise, which commences with the heavenly saints, and is carried on by the angels, is re-echoed throughout creation by every created intelligence. *Every* creature in heaven, earth, under the earth, on the sea (for it is “on” rather than “in”) and *all* that are in them, were heard by John ascribing four things, Blessing, honour, glory, and power (which, so far as they go, agree with the language of the angels)—unto Him, Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever, or, to the age of ages. One vast burst of joy and praise fills the whole universe of God. “Who is worthy?” The Lamb, Jesus. Every

saint, every angel, every creature is in blessed harmony and accord, and either sings or says it. There is no dissentient voice. Rebellious men may refuse to own Him worthy, but at that day every knee shall bow. At any moment, dear fellow Christian, we may hear His voice, and be translated by His power, to take part in the glorious new song.

And the four living creatures add their solemn and blessed "Amen." And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped. They commence by falling down in verse 8, and they close in falling down and worshipping in verse 14. The words "Him that liveth for ever and ever," though true, are not found in the best authorities in the original,



## CHAPTER VI.

THIS chapter opens with the breaking of the first of the seven seals of the mystic roll. It is evident that what follows refers to the earth. For the help of those who have not yet studied this part of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we would add a few prefatory remarks on the vision of Daniel in chapter ix. 20-27, as it is closely connected with the period and circumstances, etc., here portrayed. Space will not permit us to enter upon all the details. We can only give a short outline. It is spoken of as the vision of the seventy weeks. The weeks are weeks of years. So that seventy weeks embrace four hundred and ninety years. At the close of the sixty-ninth, *i.e.*, four hundred and eighty-three years, the Messiah appeared. After ministering about three and a half years He was cut off, crucified. Following upon His resurrection and ascent to glory, the Holy Ghost came, who forms the church. During the period of Christ's absence on high, and His presence here below, and the church's sojourn on earth, time is not reckoned. The church is composed of saints whose calling and blessing are distinctly heavenly. The present period is an interval in the ways of God on earth. One more week of seven years remains still uncompleted. It is the period when the man who is called "the beast" shall make a covenant with Israel. (Dan. ix. 27.) We shall have to refer

to further detail in connection with this as we proceed. The rapture of the heavenly saints *precedes* it (1 Thess. iv. 15-18); the close of the week will be the reappearing of Christ to establish His kingdom. That which takes place during this last week is detailed after chapter vi. to chapter xix. of the Revelation.\*

But some may say, How is it that only the latter half-week is dated in this book? This last half-week, variously spoken of as forty-two months, a time, times, and half a time, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days, is the period of Jacob's trouble, and the great tribulation (Rev. iii. 10; vii. 14), which is consequent upon the casting out of Satan to the earth (Rev. xii. 12, 13), and the breaking of the covenant by the beast in the midst of the week. Now, although the time mentioned in Daniel (the end of the sixty-ninth week) was fulfilled when the Messiah, the Prince came (Mark i. 14, 15), we know that the mass of Israel (and the world) refused Him. But a remnant received Him for about three and a half years, or half a week. Hence in mercy, though there will be governmental dealings of God (as there are now), even the beginning of sorrows, and saints will suffer, yet tribulation, even the tribulation unparalleled in the world's history (*i.e.*, Jacob's

\* We would remark here that several spiritually minded and learned servants of the Lord, who have taught and written on the Revelation, hold that there is a kind of double fulfilment of the central part of the book, with which we are fully in accord, a prolonged shadowing application during the absence of Christ, and a definite one at the close of this age, prior to the manifestation of Christ in His kingdom. Coming events cast their shadows before.

trouble), will only last for the last dated half-week. The circumstances of the first part of the week *undated* are found in chapter vi. If our readers will compare the contents of chapter vi. with Matthew xxiv. 6-12, they will see how striking the analogy is. It is the fulfilment of that which our Lord foretold—the beginning of sorrows, as already remarked.

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And 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. (Chap. vi. 1, 2.) John sees when the Lamb, who had taken the roll from the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne, opens the first of the seals. It is the commencement of His providential ways with men prior to the ushering in of His kingdom. One of the four living creatures says, as a voice of thunder, “Come and see.” The words “and see” are not found in the original. It is simply “Come.” This word is not addressed to John, but refers to that which follows. Verse 2 is the answer to the summons, where a rider upon a white horse appears. The same remark applies to all the first four seals.\* “And I saw, and behold a white horse,” etc. A “horse” in these visions denotes the providential dealings of God through human power. “White” conveys the thought of a victory secured by peaceful means. The rider has a bow,

\* There is a striking likeness between the first four seals and the sore plagues spoken of in Ezekiel xiv. 21

which would denote power to overcome opposition at a distance, without any loud accompaniment. A crown was given unto him. This successful leader is generally welcomed, and becomes the recipient of regal authority. He enters upon the stage of the world as a conqueror, carrying everything before him, and continues his success. In that, later on, in chapter xix., Christ appears on a white horse, some have erroneously thought that it is the same here. But, as said, it is the beginning of God's providential dealings in view of the establishing of Christ's kingdom.

"And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come [and see]. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword." (Vers. 3, 4.) John hears the second living creature say, Come. And there went out another horse that was *red*. The colour is in character with that which follows. It is given to the rider to take peace from the earth. Men think that an era of peace was dawning. The peaceful entrance of the conqueror leads them to thoughts of peace and safety. But it is saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. (Jer. vi. 14.) Wars will not be broken out of the earth, till Christ Himself shall have come. It breaks out again. Blood flows. The lusts and passions of men burst out again in fury, as so oft before, and they kill one another. Dreams of universal peace and fraternity are dispelled, and there is widespread carnage. "There was given

unto him a great sword." The sword is the symbol of military rule. Great power comes into this leader's hand. The short presage and duration of peace is succeeded by devastating war. Further effects are seen under seals three and four.

"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come [and see]. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." (Vers. 5, 6.) The colour black is again characteristic. As is so often the case in the history of man, war is followed by famine. Men being engaged in warfare neglect tillage. The rider holds a pair of balances, instead of a sword like him on the red horse. War is succeeded by a terrible and widespread famine. Suddenly a voice proceeds from the midst of the living creatures connected with God's throne. He knows all, and has a voice in all. Things had not yet wholly fallen into Satan's hand. The voice declares authoritatively the price, one choenix of wheat for a denarius, and three measures of barley for a denarius, which shews the prevalence of great scarcity of the necessaries of life; but the oil and wine, which are, comparatively speaking, luxuries, are not to be injured.

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come [and see]. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell

followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." (Vers. 7, 8.) The fourth living creature says, Come. And behold a *pale* horse. As in the other three seals, the colour, *pale*, is again in keeping with that which follows. The name of the rider is now said to be Death, and Hell (or Hades) keeps him company.\*

"And power [or authority] was given unto him [not them] over *the fourth* [part] of the earth to slay." How dreadful the contrast between the action of this wicked tool of Satan, and the rule of Him whom God has appointed Heir and King. The action of the one is characterised by death, and the rule of the other by life. Four things are mentioned as busy in the destruction of men, where he holds authority over the fourth of the earth, namely, the sword, hunger, death, and wild beasts, like the four sore plagues in Ezekiel, to which we have already referred.

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not

\* In Isaiah xxviii. 14-18 we find that the covenant, which we have already referred to, of Daniel ix. 27, which the Prince will confirm with many in Israel for one week of seven years, is looked at as a covenant made by the scornful rulers of that people with *death* and *hell*. "Ye have said, We have made a covenant with *death*, and with *hell* are we at agreement." (Ver. 15.) There seems to be a connection with this in that which is here working through Satanic power under this fourth seal, in the midst of the providential dealings of God.

judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Vers. 9-11.) One rejoices to find from this fifth seal, that God has devoted witnesses in the midst of all the sorrows depicted under the seals. John sees *the souls* of slain ones under the altar, figure of the cross of Christ where He suffered martyrdom. His death too there for God's glory and for sin was the foundation of the testimony which they had borne, and which cost them their lives. The heavenly saints having been translated to glory, as we have seen, God will raise up fresh witnesses, who, during the beginning of sorrows, will hold fast to the word of God, and bear testimony in the midst of the accumulating evil. They seal their testimony with their blood. They are a fresh company of martyrs. No man can serve two masters. Men at that day will not brook the light of the word of God, and will display the deadly enmity of their hearts against God by slaughtering those who bear His testimony. These martyred saints are seen in the vision in the disembodied state. They cry for *vengeance*. This makes it quite clear that they are not Christians, who are taught to love and pray for their enemies. But it is fully witnessed to in the Psalms and elsewhere that it is a characteristic cry of Jews, and of a day when God's testimony has changed. The day of grace will then be past, and the throne of God, as we have seen, become a

throne of judgment, when this company bears its testimony. Clearly they are Jews. They cry with a loud voice, "How long, O sovereign ruler [for so it reads in the Greek], holy and true, dost thou not *judge* and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?" Such language would be totally out of place from the lips of those whose hearts have been won by the gospel of the grace of God and of the glory of Christ. It is the "how long" of the Psalms (Psa. xc. 13, etc.), addressed to Him who is Sovereign Ruler, and who has almighty power to overrule and restrain the wrath of man and the power of Satan, and to control all things for His own glory, and for the profitable discipline and welfare of His people. They add "holy and true," the same words which the Lord Jesus uses in presenting Himself to the angel of the church in Philadelphia. They had sought to walk in holiness and truth before Him, and had suffered for their faithfulness unto death. Unholiness and error were abounding, and they cry for vengeance on their persecutors, who practise these things. They speak of them as dwellers upon the earth. This is a characteristic term in the book of Revelation, mentioned a dozen times or so. (See, for example, chaps. iii. 10; vi. 10; xi. 10; xiii. 8.) They appear to be a class that were living on the earth before God's heavenly testimony ceased, and those who received it were translated to glory. But having neglected or refused it, they are left behind at that moment, and instead of becoming heavenly pilgrims through faith, settle down in unbelief, and become dwellers on the earth, their minds being set

on things on the earth, instead of things above. And they become persecutors.

But the Sovereign Ruler is merciful. Moreover, other saints were yet to bear testimony and suffer for His sake. Hence white robes were given to every one of them, and they are told to rest for a little season, until these things should be fulfilled. A white robe was the recognition of their purity when surrounded with the evil of the world before their martyrdom. And they were to rest yet for a little while after their hour of affliction. Others, as said, were yet to suffer, their fellow-bondmen and their brethren, those who carried on the testimony after their death; their *brethren* probably pointing to other Jews who would share in it. It was about to be fulfilled, that these also would be killed.

In the description of the first resurrection in Revelation xx. 4-6 these martyrs are again referred to. Verse 4 is divided into three parts. The first company viewed on millennial thrones, with judgment entrusted to them, consists of the heavenly saints. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi. 2.) Next, we get souls (saints in the disembodied state) who had suffered death for the witness of Jesus and the word of God, evidently corresponding with the sufferers of Revelation vi. 9, 10. Thirdly, "and *those* which had not worshipped the beast," etc. There should be a semicolon after "word of God"; and it reads in the original "and *those* which." These correspond with the fellow-servants and brethren of chapter vi. 11, for which those of verses 9, 10 are told to wait. The latter suffer when the beast shall

have been fully manifested, and the hour of tribulation is present.

“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, 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; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” (Vers. 12-14.) “A great earthquake.” In seeking to apprehend the moral force conveyed by this language, we must be careful not to circumscribe our thoughts. We are all more or less familiar with *descriptions of earthquakes*, and their effects, whether in the earth itself or on the surrounding atmospheric heavens, etc. The Spirit of God takes this up to convey to us a terrible moral catastrophe which at the moment of the opening of the sixth seal shall affect the whole sphere of the heavens and the earth. It has been thought by several capable and spiritually minded students of this book, that this earthquake takes place before the last half-week (which commences under the seventh seal, chapter viii. 1), producing a premature panic concerning the wrath of the Lamb at His appearing. One feels very unwilling to diverge in any way from such weighty and competent testimony. But after pondering over this passage for some years a *further* thought suggests itself which one would present in all humility to the judgment of our readers. We are in full accord that it presents to us figuratively a

great moral earthquake, with very widespread effects. One has thought that it probably sets forth in graphic language the general break-up of the whole established system of the present heavens and earth; which, *commencing* at the opening of the sixth seal, before the last half-week, and producing at first a panic, *embraces in its bearing* the then existing state of things, and *probably continues in its effects for a little while*, not necessarily closing at the commencement of the last half-week. This character of things, as students of the Revelation are well aware, is not uncommon in this book. Several times the events and circumstances depicted in figure, symbol, etc., *run on for a while*, and the reader has to return again in thought to things which will precede them in their accomplishment.\*

There will be then at that day a general subversion of that which exists at present. There will be also physical signs in heaven and earth. But the moral aspect is the more important one, viz., the universal break-up of all that is fixed and stable, the darkening, etc., of ruling powers, and the fall of prominent lights, etc., etc. The earth is shaken generally. (Read Isa. xxiv. 16-23.) The sun, figure of the supreme source of light and rule, becomes black as hair-sackcloth. A power that should shed forth healthful light and influence over the whole scene will be judicially darkened. The *whole* moon (as it should read), which sets forth derivative and

\* When the Lord is manifested in judgment, men will have recovered from their panic, and will be bold in their opposition to Him, and to His rights.

reflected light, becomes as blood. The professed policy of peace will become a policy anarchic and sanguinary in its effects. The stars of heaven fall to the earth. This alone should prevent the reader from falling into the snare of literal interpretation of that which is clearly figurative. The fact is surely well known that the stars are immensely greater than the earth. One star falling on this earth would suffice to shatter it to atoms. No, it must be taken morally. We judge that these stars set forth prominent men of mark and distinction, who should be lights in the sphere in which they are set in the government of God, but who, having failed to glorify God (Daniel viii. 10), fall from their exalted position under that same just, but then judicial, dealing of God to the level of the earth. They are compared to a fig tree (which, when applied to Israel, is a national emblem) which casteth her untimely figs. Instead of proving themselves to be like a healthy tree, by bringing forth a crop of good figs at the approaching time of gathering, they cast their figs unripe before the time. Like a tree shaken by a mighty wind. Satan is the prince of the power of the air. (Eph. ii. 2.) Hence we judge that there is a mighty movement of his power at this moment, subservient to the will of God, operating in connection with the fall of these lesser luminaries. "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." The whole sphere of ruling power departs (or is removed). A scroll unfolded would shew its contents, but a scroll rolled up would signify that the use of it ceases, its contents no longer being carried

out. "And every mountain and island were moved out of their places." A mountain is often employed figuratively in scripture to set forth a great established power in the earth. An island would denote that which is solid and stable in the midst of that which is in agitation and unrest. In the course of the terrible state of things depicted concerning this great and universal moral upheaval, all established power and authority, and everything that has been fixed and stable in relation to governmental order and the general social life of men, will be removed. Nothing but instability, agitation, and general anarchy will ensue. Nothing escapes the general overthrow.

"And 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 free man, 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 the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Ver. 15-17.) This dreadful revolution of everything produces a great effect upon all classes of men. There is no sign of repentance, but only of fear and dread, with consciousness of unfitness to stand before the Judge of all. Seven classes are spoken of, shewing the completeness of the panic. The kings of the earth, the great men of mark and position, the wealthy classes, the chief military leaders, those who are renowned for their strength, those who are in bond-service, and those that are free; all are mentioned

as seeking an asylum in the caves and rocks of the mountains, a resource as useless as when men may have sought a similar refuge from the approaching flood in the days of Noah. Their cry of agony and distress rings vainly when every mountain and island is described as moved out of their places. These inanimate witnesses of God's power and strength cannot save them, however loudly and earnestly they may appeal to them to fall upon them that they might be hidden from the dreadful wrath of the One on the throne and from the Lamb. We are here further inclined to judge, that instead of it being a *premature* panic before the judgment of Christ, the Son of man at His appearing, that this terrible universal overthrow with all its attendant effects, is indeed an outpouring of wrath from the throne of God and from the Lamb which causes great fear, before that final catastrophe in relation to the quick or living nations. In chapter xix. in the description of the advent of Christ upon the white horse to judge, He has different names, but the title of the Lamb is omitted. We think that their cry, "the great day of his wrath is come," and "who is [not, shall be] able to stand?" strengthens this. When the King of kings appears in chapter xix., men are bold. There is a mighty military host with their leaders arrayed against Him. There is no thought of hiding, and wishing for death, but boldness and defiance; men will have recovered from their panic and fear.

Well may they cry, Who is able to stand? What is the answer? Whether at that day, or at His appearing, or now, there is no one who, after the

flesh, can stand before the Lord; only he, who in true repentance before God, believes His testimony concerning His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. (Mark i. 15, etc.) That one's sins are forgiven for His name's sake. (1 John ii. 12.) A just God justifies and reconciles him. Henceforth, through the gift of the Spirit, he stands complete in Christ before Him. The cry, "Who is able to stand?" shall never issue from his lips.



## CHAPTER VII.

“AND after these things I saw four angels 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. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried 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.” (Vers. 1-3. Compare Mark xiii. 27.) We have seen in chapter vi. under the sixth seal, the awful catastrophe that will characterise the end of the present age, during the running out of the close of Daniel’s seventieth week. At the commencement of chapter viii. we get the opening of the seventh seal, the last. And from thence onward, till the end of chapter xviii., we find details of the ways and judgments of God during the last half-week. Chapter vii. comes in as a parenthesis. God in grace draws the curtain aside, and shews us, before unfolding the awful judgments of that period, that He will preserve a measured number from among the tribes of His ancient people Israel, and also a great multitude of Gentiles. They are brought through the judgments into blessing on earth, during the thousand years reign of Christ. Many

have thought that these two companies are further presentations of the church of God. But Israelites lose their nationality when they come into the church. In the church, Jew and Gentile are members of one and the same body. (Eph. iii. 5, 6.) All who compose it are a new creation in Christ, and distinctions such as Jew and Gentile cease. Having put on *the new man*, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but *Christ is all*, and in all. (Col. iii. 10, 11.) The church's position is heavenly; those of chapter vii. are blessed on the earth.

Our chapter tells us that *after these things, i.e.*, after that which we have dwelt upon in chapter vi., John saw four angels. They were standing on the four corners of the earth. We must beware of "the letter" in such an allusion as this. We take the four corners to refer to the four cardinal points. These angels hold back the four winds of the earth, that it should neither blow on the earth, or the sea, or any tree. The reason is given in the verses following. Now Satan is the prince of the power of the air, and we get instances in scripture where he raises the wind for destruction. (See Job i. 19, for example.) It appears, however, here that God by angelic instrumentality restrains for the moment the destructive power of the wind. It is in angel hands, and to be held back. Neither the earth, which we are inclined to look at figuratively as setting forth the sphere of the world which hitherto has been ordered and stable; nor the sea, the sphere which is in an unsettled,

disturbed, and revolutionary condition; nor any tree, individuals who stand out in prominence among men, were to be blown upon. A fifth angel explains why. He ascends from the east, or *the sun rising*. This is significant. That which is about to be done is in view of the day when Christ as the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. (Mal. iv. 2.) He holds the seal of the living God in His hand. Christians are sealed with the Holy Ghost for the day of redemption and glory. (Eph. i. 13.) Here it is the seal of the *living* God. Those who are sealed with this seal are sealed that they may be preserved during the coming judgments, and to live long life on the earth. (Isa. lxxv. 22; lxxvi. 22.)

In Ezekiel ix. 1-11, as six men who had charge over the city of Jerusalem were called, on account of its wickedness, to draw near, each with their slaughter weapon in their hand, one of their number, clothed with linen, and with a writer's inkhorn by his side, was commissioned to go through the midst, and to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst. The others were then told to go through the city and smite without mercy, for the iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah was exceeding great. But the man clothed with linen, who had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

Here, the angel with the seal cries with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given (in the just ways and judgment of God) 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. It is blessed to remark how all through scripture mercy rejoices against judgment. The figure of a seal upon the forehead would manifestly distinguish these spared ones from the ungodly around.

“And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” (Ver. 4.) It is deeply precious and interesting to see John, the beloved servant of the Lord, who pillowed his head upon his Master’s bosom when upon the earth, taken here into His deep secrets. Jesus Christ makes known first to John, and then through him to His servants, things which must shortly come to pass. (Rev. i. 1.) Twelve thousand of *all* the tribes of Israel are sealed, commencing with Judah and closing with Benjamin. We read, “our Lord sprang out of Judah.” Benjamin, which adjoins Judah, formed part of that kingdom, when the ten tribes were divided from the two after the death of Solomon. (1 Kings xii.) Twelve is the number in scripture which sets forth administrative completeness in relation to the earth. The twelve here is multiplied by thousands. A measured number of each tribe is sealed to be preserved of God through the pending judgments. The whole one hundred and forty four thousand are the aggregate of the nation, which God will establish and bless in the promised land. The Deliverer shall come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and so *all Israel* shall be saved. (Rom.

xi. 26.) They shall all know the Lord from the least to the greatest. (Heb. viii. 10, 11.) Israel shall then blossom and bud, and bring forth fruit. (Isa. xxvii. 6.)

It is to be noticed that Dan is omitted among the tribes, and Manasses, the firstborn of Joseph, supplies his place. Some have thought that the antichrist would come of the tribe of Dan. We are far more inclined to think that none but a Jew of Judah could impose himself upon the nation, seeing especially their jealousy in relation to genealogies. And it is further remarkable that when the tribes are called to divide the inheritance by lot in Ezekiel xlvi., the first tribe mentioned is Dan; Ephraim and Manasseh are mentioned instead of Joseph; and Levi gets his portion within the confines of the holy oblation. We are not prepared to offer any suggestion as to Dan. But there are interesting scriptures to be weighed in relation to Joseph in Deuteronomy xxi. 17 and 1 Chronicles v. 1, 2.

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (Vers. 9, 10.) No student of scripture surely can fail to be interested in this great multitude of blest ones. Clearly they are Gentiles. They form such a vast company, that though God knows every one, no man can number them. They are not

whole nations, etc., themselves, but of or *out of* them. There is not a nation, tribe, people or tongue upon the whole of this wide globe, but God will have some *out of* them for Himself. They are not viewed as the heavenly saints (or elders) seated on thrones, but simply *standing before the throne*, and before the Lamb. They are clothed in white raiment (shewing their purity and fitness to stand). The ground of it we shall see a little lower down. "And palms [or palm branches] in their hands." Palm branches would be out of character in connection with a heavenly company. It gives one clear indication among others, that this company is an earthly one. When Israel shall keep the feast of tabernacles in the land, taking branches of palm trees, etc. (Lev. xxiii. 40), these Gentiles will be in association with them. They do not sing like the heavenly saints, but cry in a loud voice, with one tongue as it were, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. They ascribe their salvation which they enjoy to the One on the throne, recognising Jehovah Elohim Shaddai as their God, and to the Lamb, the One who went into death for them.

Their salvation is a joy to the angelic hosts. *All* the angels stand round about the throne, and the elders and the living creatures. (Notice here that the elders are mentioned first.) And they all prostrate themselves upon their faces before God, adding their whole-hearted Amen to God's mercy to this vast innumerable company of saved ones, and ascribing blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and

might (or strength) unto our God, to the age of ages. And again they say Amen. He is the God of angels as well as of men.

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What [or who] are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.” It is remarkable that an elder puts this double question to John, Who are they, and where do they come from? But these white-robed multitudes are strangers to him. He neither knows them, nor whence they came. Hence, he replies, Sir, *thou* knowest. The elders, as we have already remarked, have the knowledge of God and of His ways. And in this vision the elder knows who this company is, and can tell John about them. John was assured that he knew. First, he tells the prophet that, “These are they which came out [or, come out] of [the] great tribulation.” The definite article “the” is in the original, and it is of all-importance here. When Jacob’s trouble is spoken of it is called “*great* tribulation,” without the article. It is a question of the severity of the trial. But when *the* great tribulation is mentioned it is a question of the universal extent of trial. This company of Gentiles saved out of all nations, etc., passes through the tribulation that comes upon all parts of the world. “They come out of it,” and enjoy God’s salvation on earth in the kingdom, or age to come. “And have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” This gives the key to understanding the meaning of the raiment they wear in the vision. It is “white.” The language

employed in relation to their washing differs somewhat from that of Revelation i. 5. There it says, "and washed *us*." Here it is "washed *their robes*."\* But it is the same precious blood of God's Lamb. Without its shedding there is neither remission of sins nor fitness to stand before God. (Heb. ix. 22; Eph. ii. 13.)

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them [or, spread His tabernacle over them]. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." (Vers. 15, 16.) They are viewed not as elders seated on thrones round the central throne of God, but as *before it*. Having come out of the trial, and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, *therefore* they occupy this position of favour, and are privileged to serve Him day and night in His temple. This temple service is clearly on earth. They are privileged to serve *day* and *night*. In the heavenly sphere, when it is a question of the service of His servants, we read that "there is *no night* there." (Rev. xxii. 3-5.) Presumably it will be the temple, which the Man whose Name is called the Branch shall build when the kingdom shall be established in His hand, of which we have a detailed description in Ezekiel xl.-xliv. We find in Isaiah lvi. 7, that the house of the Lord shall be also a house of prayer for *all people*. And in

\* Two different words for washed are employed in these two passages in the original.

Zechariah xiv. 16 we are told that "it shall come to pass, that every one that is *left of all the nations* which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and *to keep the feast of tabernacles.*"

"And he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them," not dwell among them. This is the force of the original. There is a remarkable passage in Isaiah iv. 5, 6, in relation to mount Zion, which will be the earthly centre of the Lord's kingdom, which seems to connect itself with that which we find here. This company, being associated with Israel in connection with the service in the temple, will apparently share with them other privileges and blessings. "Upon all the glory shall be a *defence*" (or, *a covering*). (Isa. iv. 5.) "And there shall be a *tabernacle* for a shadow," etc. It would be well for our readers to consider the whole passage. He will tabernacle over Jerusalem, and He will tabernacle over this innumerable company of Revelation vii. Verse 13 shews that during the terrible tribulation out of which they had come, they had suffered from the lack of the necessities of life, and had been exposed without a proper shelter, for there is the precious promise that they shall neither hunger nor thirst any more, neither should they be any more exposed to the fierce rays of the sun, nor any burning heat. In that glorious day, the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, and for whose name they had suffered, will more than make up to them the loss they had suffered during the short period of trial. He Himself will feed (or shepherd) them, caring

for their every need. He Himself will lead them to the very sources, the fountains of water of life, where once the forces of death were so strong. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, in that day when man and all creation shall rejoice in Him. No wonder that they cry as one with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God . . . and unto the Lamb."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

THE tribes of Israel having been sealed for preservation, and the curtain also drawn aside, so to speak, to shew us the innumerable company of Gentiles who go through the great tribulation, and come into the blessing of the kingdom on earth, the Lamb opens the seventh seal of the roll of the mysteries and judgments of God. Before we get the further revelation of God under this seal, which is one of severe and terrible judgment, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. It is an ominous pause in the dealings of God, a prelude to the awful storm which follows. We are all more or less familiar with the lull before the bursting of a thunder-storm. All nature, so to speak, seems to hold its breath. There is oft a remarkable stillness in the air. Silence pervades the scene, and for a short while everything seems to be held in suspense. Suddenly the wind begins to stir, the heavens gather blackness, the clouds threaten, the lightning flashes, the thunder rolls, the rain descends in torrents, and all the elements seem to be engaged in great conflict. So will it be at that awful moment. Solemn indeed is this pause of God, ere the further awful judgments from His throne fall upon a prescribed portion of a guilty world.

“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.”

(Ver. 2.) Seven is a characteristic number of this wonderful prophecy. It denotes spiritual completeness, whether in good or evil. Seven angels are seen standing before God, waiting silently in His holy presence, ready to carry out His behests. Seven trumpets are given unto them. Trumpets are used to sound, and the sound is loud and far-reaching. They arrest the attention, and mostly awaken inquiry from all who hear. The breaking of seals is more a silent action, and the masses will probably account for many of the providential judgments under the seals, as they account for catastrophes and accidents, etc., now. But that which happens under the seven trumpets, which seems to be detail of the seventh seal, is far more severe. They announce loudly and directly the intervention of God in judgment. In verse 2 the trumpets are given to the seven angels, but before they prepare themselves to sound, a remarkable word concerning the action of another angel is introduced.

“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.”  
(Vers. 3, 4.)

From the general character of this passage, and from the action of the angel, we judge that it is Christ in angelic garb. Others have spoken of Him as the angel-priest. He has a golden censer.

Everything is in keeping with absolute righteousness. *Much* incense is given to Him. There are saints on earth at this moment, as we have already seen, and they are characterised by prayers. The incense is offered with the prayers—the prayers of *all* saints who will be here below during the trumpet judgments. He offers them on the *golden* altar. We must bear in mind that the golden altar was not in the outside court, but in the tabernacle, as also in the temple, though not in the holiest of all. (Exo. xxx.) As High Priest, Christ will offer the incense and the prayers together before God. The golden altar here is before the throne. How precious for the Christian to be thus reminded that all the sweet incense of what Christ is to God (His deep perfections) ascends to Him and gives efficacy to our prayers at the present moment. “The smoke of the incense,” *i.e.*, the sweet perfume of Christ ascends before God out of the angel’s hand. How deeply precious *to Him!*

“And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.” The prayers of the suffering saints are in communion with God’s thoughts of judgment, which further confirms that it is no question of Christians here, who pray *for* their enemies. These prayers with the incense are acceptable to God. It is the same character of things in this way which we get in the Old Testament. The angel, Christ, as seen, offers them on the golden altar, and then fills the same censer from the fire. It is part of God’s judgment of men for

their wickedness. *All* judgment is committed unto the Son. It is the angel-priest—Christ, as we believe—who executes it in this passage. The angels are associated with Him in each announcement. Immediately the fire falls, the symbols of judgment are mentioned. The half-hour's silence is over, the storm, referring to our figure, bursts forth.

“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.” All the seven prepare themselves together, but they sound their trumpets in succession. Although as yet we have no dates referred to, it is clear that the judgments under the trumpets embrace the period of the last half-week (or three and a half years) of Daniel's prophecy, for under the seventh trumpet, voices announce the establishment of the kingdom, which is at the close of that period. We would further remark, that in the earthquake mentioned among the symbols of judgment in verse 5, there is, we think, certain analogy with that of chapter vi. 12, to which we have already alluded.

“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.” (Ver. 7.) The expression “the third part” is employed some ten times or so in the first four trumpets, and clearly denotes a prescribed limit to these terrible judgments. They are not universal, but the third part, we judge, refers to the Roman earth. Hail and fire, mingled with blood, would set forth apparently a downpour of destructive

judgment, consuming in its effects, accompanied with awful bloodshed, upon the earth. The third part of the earth was burnt up. We think that the earth also must be applied figuratively in this passage (*viz.*, the prophetic earth) as setting forth the sphere of (at the moment) fixed and stable government; a third part of it comes under this consuming judgment of God. Likewise the third part of the trees, which would again set forth persons of prominence. And all green grass, that is, all that has hitherto flourished and prospered within this sphere is destroyed.

“And 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.” (Vers. 8, 9.) A great mountain is a figure of some great constituted authority. Men would call it a great power.\* Burning with fire shews that this power is subject to divine judgment. It is cast down from its lofty eminence into the sea, *i.e.*, into the midst of masses of mankind found in a restless, unsettled and revolutionary condition. The effect of it is sanguinary warfare, and a third part lose their lives. “The third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died.” We judge that this refers to those who, in the midst of the social chaos and

\* In Daniel ii. 35 the stone that smote the image becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. The stone is a figure of Christ, and His power and kingdom will be established like a great mountain, filling the whole earth.

revolution which characterise the mass, have hitherto maintained a religious profession, having a name to live in the midst of a general dead state. But under this trumpet the pressure becomes so great that a third part of these also die *morally*, being carried away in the terrible vortex. "And the third part of the ships were destroyed." This apparently sets forth the traffic and commerce on the sea of those who are within the sphere affected. The third part of this means of wealth is destroyed.

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the 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." (Vers. 10, 11.) A great star denotes some exalted personage set in a high position to be a source of light and blessing for all who come beneath his influence. But failing to answer to his privilege, he becomes the subject of the judgment of God. He falls, burning *as it were* a lamp (or burning as a torch). A third part of the rivers and the fountains of waters are polluted. Rivers fertilize the countries through which they flow and produce fruitfulness, and fountains of waters are the sources and springs of the same. Through the fall of this star, the great currents and even the sources of thought among men, which should produce a healthy and fruitful moral influence, are affected within a third part of the sphere in view. The

name of the star is *Wormwood*, bitter. And the third part of the waters affected by this influence becomes bitter. And *many men* die from imbibing them. We take it to signify *moral* death.

“And 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.” (Ver. 12.) The sun, looked at figuratively, would denote supreme ruling power in relation to the earth, the moon reflected and derivative power, and the stars lesser lights. They probably may be found in the chief ruling power within the prescribed sphere; the parliamentary or other forms of government which reflect that power, deriving authority therefrom; and other individuals occupying important posts in the rule of the world. A third part is darkened morally by the judicial dealing of God, so that there is lack of light both for a third part of the day and of the night.

“And I beheld, and heard an angel 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!” (Ver. 13.) The word translated “an angel” in this passage should read “an eagle.” It is in perfect keeping with that which follows, for the eagle says with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe.” It is a widespread thought amongst men that the flying over of an eagle is a harbinger of woe—or of some

sinister event. Hence it is comparatively easy to seize the import of a flying eagle here. It is a prelude to the sounding of the last three trumpets, the judgments under which are still more severe, and are not *limited* to the third part as under the first four.\* The eagle says with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, *to the inhabitants of the earth.*" This is the same class that we have already spoken of in chapter iii. 10, inhabitants or dwellers upon the earth, an apostate company whose interests are all centred in the earth. The judgments under the fifth and sixth trumpets prefaced with these terrible woes will fall upon them. They take place also, we judge, within the sphere of the prophetic earth, where the christian profession had been paramount.

The first brings before us moral thoughts in relation to delusions having their centre in Palestine; the second to delusions connected with the armies of the east. The third is the coming of Christ to judge and reign.

\* Except as to the number of men destroyed under the sixth.



## CHAPTER IX.\*

“AND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall [or fallen] from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.” (Vers. 1, 2.) This first woe commences with the fall of a star. Set in an exalted position of rule and authority, and as a light for all within his influence, an individual of eminence is seen *fallen* (New Trans.) morally to the level of the earth. The key of the pit of the abyss is given unto him. There is judicial dealing of God in His government of men. It appears to correspond with the moment when *God shall send strong delusion*, that men should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.)

Having received the key, he opens the abyss. An enormous volume of smoke, like the smoke of an immense furnace, ascends from it, and darkens both the sun and the air. A widespread darkening,

\* In a note on page 74 we have remarked that many think there is a prolonged shadowy fulfilment of the central parts of the Revelation, before the definite fulfilment at the close of this age. Looked at from this point of view, we judge that the locusts under the fifth trumpet, and the host of horsemen under the sixth, set forth the invasions of the Saracenic and Turkish hosts.

delusive, and blinding moral influence proceeds from the place where Satan later will be bound. Both the supreme ruling power and the whole moral atmosphere in the regions under judgment are affected by it. Darkness prevails where formerly light had been diffused.

“And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them 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.” (Vers. 3, 4.) It will help us to understand this, if we bear in mind that the centre of God’s ways and dealings is in the east. Locusts are far more familiar to Easterns than to Westerns. In many countries in the east and elsewhere there are seasons when enormous clouds of locusts appear, settling upon the land, and devouring every bit of green on earth, bush, or tree, and so turning a flourishing country into a desolate wilderness. Locusts are a familiar figure of a devastating army in the pages of the Old Testament. (Joel i. 4.) In the vision these locusts emanate from the smoke of the pit. They originate in the moral darkness pervading the scene. As it was *given* to the one set forth by a star to open the pit, so now power is *given* to these locusts which come upon the earth as the scorpions of the earth have power. They have a deadly sting.

They are all under control. They receive a command not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any

green thing, nor any tree. That is to say, that wherever there is any sign of vitality or prosperity, it was to be spared. They were only to hurt those men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads. This clearly refers to the commencement of chapter vii. There, as we have seen, the angel from the east tells the four angels who hold the winds of the earth not to hurt the earth, sea, or trees till the servants of God were sealed. These sealed ones were of the twelve tribes of Israel. Here, the grass of the earth, green things and trees are spared, but those men who had not the seal are the sufferers at the righteous hand of God, who is just in judgment as in mercy.

“And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.” (Vers. 5, 6.) Again it repeats it was *given*. Not that they should kill, but torment them. For many the judgment is worse than death. The sting of these moral locusts produces *torment*. Those affected by the delusive and devilish doctrine which prevails are so tormented in conscience that they would gladly escape their abject misery by the way of death. For five weary months they are tormented. *In those days*. Oh what mercy to know that we who now believe will never pass into them! In those days shall men seek death. Death from which so many now would gladly escape, and of which they speak as an enemy, will then be sought

as a friend, but sought in vain. They shall not find it. They desire to die, but instead of welcome death coming to relieve them from this poisonous sting, it shall flee from them. The sting of a literal scorpion is painful in the extreme, but how dreadful the remorse of conscience when a man is stricken by one of these heartless moral instruments of judgment.

“And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.” (Vers. 7-10.) To understand this description we need to apprehend the moral force of the powerful imagery employed in the passage. In comparing this passage with Joel ii., we gather first of all that it is a question of a mighty army, composed chiefly of cavalry, and fully equipped for war. It is a religious and fanatical host professing righteousness. On their heads they have, *as it were*, crowns *like gold*. It is an imitation, contrasting strongly with the crowns borne by the elders in chapter iv. They have faces as men. They are fearless and bold. But there is subjection to an evil power ruling over them, for they have hair as the hair of women. Teeth as those of lions would denote that they are

a savage and devouring force. Breastplates as of iron that their consciences are sealed against all mercy and pity for their victims. The sound of their wings, as the sound of many horses running to war, implies that it is a swiftly moving host, impetuous and determined, ready and swift to shed blood in war. Stings are in their tails, which are like scorpions. Moreover, these marauders penetrate everywhere, leaving their terrible sting behind. They probably force their Satanic doctrine at the point of the sword. Their power is to hurt men *five months*, confirming what we have already remarked in verse 5.

“And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.” In Proverbs xxx. 27 it says that the locusts have no king. But here those represented by them have a king, and we are told who he is. It is the angel of the bottomless pit. This is not Satan himself, as some have hastily and erroneously concluded, for at the time covered by this vision he will be at the zenith of his power in the earth. He is cast out of heaven to earth before this (Rev. xii. 7-12), but is not chained in the abyss until it has passed, and then he is bound as a prisoner, and will have lost his princely power. This king, however, appears to be a direct instrument of Satan (God at the time dealing judicially as we have seen), and is probably alluded to in Isaiah xiv. The woe is Satanic in its origin and character, whoever may be the prime actor through whom he works. In the Hebrew tongue

the name of this angel-king is Abaddon. (See also Job xxvi. 6; xxviii. 22; xxxi. 12.) It signifies "Destruction." In the Greek tongue the name is Apollyon, which signifies "Destroyer." The men who suffer under this awful destructive woe may speak one or both of these tongues.

"One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter." (Ver. 12.) The three woes are evidently successive. One (or the first) woe has passed. The second and third come *after* these things. The original is more definite than is implied by the word "hereafter." The first is accomplished by Satanic delusions, the second more by human elements, and the third (chap. xi. 14-19) by the Lord Himself.

"And 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." This voice comes from the four horns of the golden altar referred to in chapter viii. 3. It is before God. The same faithful God who gladly listens to the prayers offered with incense of His suffering saints of that day, calls for judgment on the men who try and persecute them. The Euphrates is the eastern boundary of the land promised to Israel, but which they failed to possess. (Josh. i. 1-4.) Four angels are bound in (or rather "at") that river, and an enormous host of warriors are let loose upon territory comprised within the confines of the old Roman empire.

"And the four angels were loosed, which were

prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them." (Vers. 15, 16.) At a defined moment the bound angels are loosed for the execution of this dreadful judgment of God. "The third" is again mentioned, as under the first four trumpets. There is widespread slaughter. In the first woe it was moral destruction, but here it is both moral and physical. In the former men were not to be killed. But in this latter one third of the men within the invaded sphere is slaughtered. An enormous host of cavalry, twice ten thousand times ten thousand, as it should read, is employed to carry it out. John heard the number of them.

"And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt." (Vers. 17-19.)

The prophet sees both horses and horsemen in the vision. The latter wear breastplates of fire and jacinth and brimstone. A powerful and numerous army goes forth upon its deadly mission, carrying everything before it. With consciences steeled against mercy, they are the instruments of the

judgment of God. The heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, shewing the savage and destructive character of this awful onslaught. Fire, smoke and brimstone issue from their mouths. By these three *plagues*, for this is what they denote, according to the original, the third part of the men are killed. "For their power [that is, of the horses] is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt." Not only does this vast marauding host of Euphratean horsemen cause wholesale destruction of life, but they leave the poisonous, deadly and devilish doctrines behind them, like the trail of the serpent. The serpent tails in the vision having heads would seem to shew that these doctrines, which have such awful power over men, are a studied system of evil formed in the minds of men under the influence of the serpent. "With them they do hurt." The victims suffer from this deadly moral poison. Yet, awful as is this chastisement of God, and notwithstanding that death, physical and moral, surrounds them on all sides, those who escape being killed persist in their wickedness. The chapter closes with the description of their evil practices.

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these 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." (Vers. 20, 21.) One third of the

men in the sphere in question perish, and yet the remainder repent not. Two things continue to characterise them. Flagrant idolatry, which witnesses to the righteousness of God in causing this judgment by the horsemen to be executed. They worship the works of their own hands instead of worshipping God. They make idols of the metals which God has created for the use and comfort of His creatures, and bow down before them, although they can neither see, nor hear, nor walk! And they repent not of their murders, witchcraft, fornication, or thefts. They are characterised by the shedding of their neighbours' blood, by dabbling in spiritual wickedness, by breaches against the sanctity of marriage, and by the appropriations of their neighbours' goods. Speaking broadly, they are guilty of many open breaches of their responsibility towards God and towards their neighbour, as set forth in the ten commandments. The hour of God's righteous retribution had arrived. Strong is He who executeth His word.

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## CHAPTER X.

“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.” (Ver. 1.) It is all-important to apprehend to whom this angel refers. He is mighty, and is seen by John come, or rather *coming*, down from heaven. A cloud is a well-known symbol of the presence of Jehovah. Doubtless it is the Lord in angelic garb. He is the angel of the covenant. Having a rainbow round His head shews that, in taking possession of the sea and earth (which He was about to announce His intention of doing), He remembers His covenant of old. In spite of terrible judgments which precede and accompany His taking the kingdom, He remembers mercy which rejoices against judgment, and He will deliver many. His countenance is as the sun. Supreme power, rule and light are His. He is the Sun of righteousness, and will come with healing in His wings. But His feet are as pillars of fire. He is strong to crush His foes in searching judgment, treading them as ashes beneath His feet. He will consume the wicked.

“And he had in his hand a little book open.” When Daniel received a marvellous communication in relation to His people, and their time of trouble and deliverance, he was told to shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.

(Dan. xii. 4.) But here the angel holds an opened book in his hand. Its contents are to be understood, and about to be fulfilled. "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." (Vers. 2, 3.) "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?" saith the prophet Amos. (Chap. iii. 4.) When Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, plants His feet upon His inheritance, His right foot upon the unsettled and His left foot on the settled part thereof, He will cry with a loud voice, as of a roaring lion, for the prey is His!

"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." (Vers. 3, 4.) The lion-like cry of the angel is accompanied with the utterance of the voices of seven thunders, fit symbol to usher in the announcement the angel is about to make. John apparently understood them, insomuch that he was about to write what he heard. But another voice arrested him, a voice out of heaven, and commanded him to *seal up* the utterances of the seven thunders, and *not to write* them. Hence these utterances are not revealed.

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore 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 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." (Vers. 5-7.) Now the angel (who, as already stated, we believe to be the Lord), standing on the sea and on the earth, lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by Him that lives to the ages of ages, the great Creator, who by His mighty fiat called heaven, earth and sea, and all things in them into existence, that (not that there should be time no longer, as it is erroneously translated, but) there should be *no longer delay*. Everything was about to be closed up. The seventh angel was shortly about to sound the seventh trumpet. And in the days of the voice, when he shall begin to sound, the present delay would cease, the mystery (or secret) of God would be finished.\* We understand this secret of God to signify the patient invisible dealings of God with men, since evil entered the world, and His apparent indifference to it. When the seventh trumpet shall be sounded this period will close. Christ shall be manifested in power and take the kingdom. All will be accomplished, as He has declared (or made known the glad tidings) to His servants the prophets. Every prophet, as many as have spoken,

\* We get the same expression, "the mystery of God," in Colossians ii 2. But it is the secret of God's ways seen from an entirely different point of view. It is the blessing side: and the apostle has an intense desire that the saints may enter into them, that we may discover the hid treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

has announced glad tidings in relation to that glorious day.

“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.” (Ver. 8.) The voice from heaven of verse 5 speaks a second time to the prophet. He is told to go and take the little opened book (a book apparently of prophetic utterances) in the hand of the angel thus standing and claiming both sea and earth as His. “And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” John goes in obedience and asks for the book. The angel tells him both to take it and to eat it up, and what the effect of so doing would be, namely, bitter to digest, but sweet as honey to the taste. The prophet takes and eats it, and proves the truth of his words. But the order is reversed. It is first said to be sweet to the taste, then bitter to digest. The contents of the book seem to be similar in character to what we so often discover in prophecy. The great theme running all through is the kingdom. The Messiah would come, and the kingdom with all its attendant blessedness be established in His hand. What believer can

meditate upon it without tasting its sweetness! But how will it be introduced? By a series of judgments both preceding and accompanying our Lord's return, bitter indeed to digest. The prophet here tastes the sweetness of that which the little opened book contains before he realises the bitterness of the holy judgments attendant thereupon. The next chapter contains probably details of what is set forth in the book, and John, in communion of soul with God, could not fail to taste the sweetness of the testimony of the Lord's witnesses in a day of abounding evil, and of the introduction of the kingdom, and also to realise the bitterness of the judgments to be executed, as set forth in the earthquake of verse 13, and at the hand of the Lord Himself in verse 18.

This brings us down to the end of the age, and to the introduction of the kingdom, as set forth in chapter xi. verses 15-18, which accordingly ends one section of the prophet's testimony. But in verse 19 the temple of God is opened in heaven, and a further prophetic testimony begins, rendered from God through the prophet, in accord with chapter x. 11. "*Thou must prophesy again.*" From that day onwards peoples, nations, tongues and kings have heard and read these things, which must shortly come to pass. They are unfolded from chapter xi. 19 down to the close of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

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## CHAPTER XI.

AFTER John had eaten the book and been told that he must prophesy again, a reed was given him like unto a rod. And the angel stood, and said, "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." Now the scripture saith that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. xi. 29.) His word is full of promises concerning His beloved and privileged earthly people Israel. "Lo-ammi," not my people, is written upon them for the moment, on account of their grievous departure from Him, and their many sins. But He has neither forgotten them, nor His promises to restore and bless them. At the moment indicated in the opening of Revelation xi., the Jews recommence to come into prominence in the governmental ways of God. It is clear from scripture that they, speaking generally (*i.e.*, Judah and Benjamin), will return to the holy land before the ten tribes (often spoken of in prophecy as Ephraim). Many Jews have already returned, but it is estimated that some thirteen millions or so are still scattered among the Gentile nations. Great numbers will return, and be found in the land shortly after the removal of the heavenly saints to glory. (1 Thess. iv. 15-18.) They will set up the altar and rebuild the temple, but *still in unbelief*. (2 Thess. ii. 4.) But in chapter xi. we find that God has raised up a witness for Himself in their midst. It is the commencement of the last half-week, the hour of Jacob's trouble (Jer. xxx. 7;

Daniel xii. 1), during which two-thirds are cut off and die, one-third being preserved through it. (Zech. xiii. 8.) The Lord speaks to His own in view of that day. "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." (Isa. xxvi. 20.)

Turning to the detail of the chapter before us, the prophet is told by the angel to measure first the altar (compare Ezra iii. 1-3), because it is only on the ground of sacrifice, which points to the one perfect sacrifice of Christ, that God and His people could meet. Apart from redemption, no one now could have a standing before, or be in relation with God. Secondly, the temple, the recognised visible dwelling-place of God (though, alas, as we shall see, an usurper appears in the midst of the people, and exalts himself as God (2 Thess. ii. 4); and before the shekinah glory returns (Ezek. xl.-xliv.), the temple will be rebuilt by the Man whose name is called "the Branch" (Zech. vi. 12); the one referred to in this chapter xi. being probably destroyed). Thirdly, "them that worship therein," which shews that there will be a remnant restored to a recognised position before God, on the ground of redemption, and that He Himself takes care to secure all this for Himself and them.

"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." The court of the temple is not to be measured. It is to be left, or *cast* out. (The hour of blessing for the Gentiles

as such, subordinate to Israel, of which the prophecy more or less testifies, had not yet arrived.) The Gentiles generally at this time, lapsing more and more from God, and given over to strong delusion and infidelity, will be manifesting their wickedness, and will tread under foot the holy city, Jerusalem. The temple, altar, and the worshippers (the remnant) having been measured, God secures in faithfulness at that day all that is morally of Himself. But the court of the temple is cast out, and given to the Gentiles. It is not to be measured. This treading down of the holy city will last forty-two months, Daniel's last half-week of years. (Chap. xiii. 5.)

“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.” (Ver. 3.) God had said, “Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall the matter be established.” (Deut. xix. 15.) Two is sufficient witness; three is full witness. At this dread moment, when the mass of the Jews will be back in their land in unbelief, and under the oppression of the Gentiles, God will raise up sufficient witness in a remnant of His earthly people. And He will give them power to render a testimony, which is very precious to Him. So much so, that its duration is reckoned by days instead of months. Every day of the one thousand two hundred and sixty, the forty-two months of the Gentile oppression and desecration of the holy city, these witnesses, sustained by divine power, render their faithful testimony. They are clothed in sackcloth. The reader who is familiar

with Old Testament scripture will know that this is a sign of repentance, self-judgment and humbling before God. (Jonah iii. 5-10.) These witnesses take to heart before Him the sad moral state and suffering of Jehovah's ancient people. Sighing and crying, they look to God for support and final deliverance.

They are spoken of in a fourfold way. First, as witnesses, then as olive trees, next as candlesticks (ver. 4), and finally as prophets. (Ver. 10.) We think there is clear evidence to shew that we must not limit this testimony to two individuals. We have no doubt that, as the twenty-four elders represent the sum of the heavenly saints, so here the two witnesses represent a company among the Jews. In verse 7 the beast, then at the zenith of his power, *makes war* with them at the close of their testimony, and overcomes and kills them. Such language could scarcely be employed if only two individuals were in question. There is a remarkable allusion to these witnesses as olive trees on either side of a candlestick all of gold in Zechariah iv. 3-14. They are said to be "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." (Ver. 14.) And in Revelation xi. 4 these two olive trees stand before the God of the earth. Oil is produced by olive trees, and is often used in scripture as a figure of the Holy Ghost. Candlesticks, or lampstands, are for the support of the light. We gather from this that this witnessing remnant of Jews testifies in the power of the Holy Ghost to the rights of Christ (the angel of the covenant of chapter x.) as *the God of the earth*, maintaining

a light for Him amid the surrounding and increasing darkness till the seventh trumpet is sounded, and the kingdoms of the world become His. In the scripture already referred to, the prophet asks the angel who shewed him the olive trees what they are. And he explains that it is *the word of the Lord*, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. iv. 1-6.) So, also, in the future hour of trouble, this Jewish remnant will testify to the word of the Lord, not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit. The olive trees in Zechariah are further said to empty the golden oil out of themselves through the two golden pipes, a figure, we apprehend, of the word of God in righteousness flowing out from the remnant in the midst of the prevailing corruption. It should be clear to all our readers that this testimony is of a very different character from that which Christians are called to bear in the power of the Holy Ghost. We should testify to the glory of Christ at God's right hand, and to the grace of God which saves and associates believers with Him in heavenly blessings. But this Jewish testimony is in relation to the God of all the earth. His rights were refused in Christ at His first appearing. But Christ will surely reappear, and take possession of it, as well as of the heavens, and these witnesses assert His rights against the usurper that Satan will set up (of which we shall shortly hear more), and the Gentile oppressors.

"And 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." (Ver. 5.) We get here a further contrast to Christian testimony. The Christian is taught to love and pray for his enemies, returning good for evil. But if any man *wills* to hurt these Jews (and the original is as strong as that), the word of God goes forth from their lips as devouring fire. If any man *wills* to hurt them, in this manner, he *must* be killed.

"These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." (Ver. 6.) Power is given to them to execute judgments similar to those which the Lord executed through the instrumentality of Elijah and Moses of old. As in the days of the apostasy of Israel under Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah having prayed earnestly, God closed the heavens, and rain ceased for three years and a half, so in the coming apostasy,\* these witnesses of God will have power to shut heaven, so that it rain not for that same period, during which their prophecy will be maintained. And, as Moses was used of God in Egypt to turn the waters into blood, and to smite the Egyptians and their land with ten plagues when Pharaoh refused the emigration of Israel, so also these witnesses will have power to execute similar judgment—all plagues—as often as they will.

"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome

\* The elements which form the apostasy are already working.

them, and kill them." So long as their testimony lasts their enemies are powerless against them and fall before them when they injure them. But at the close they suffer for their testimony unto death. The means of their overthrow is the beast. This is the first mention of this awful being. Much is said of him in subsequent chapters. It will suffice to say that he will be head of the revived Roman Empire, the chief power of the western Gentile world in this coming crisis. He is viewed here as deriving his power and having his origin from the abyss of evil. He will wield great military power, and will turn it against God's witnesses, seeking to blot out all testimony and light for Him upon the earth. He makes war against them, and conquers them. Their faithful testimony during the one thousand two hundred and sixty days being over, God allows them to suffer martyrdom for His glory. Judgment, swift and sure, comes upon those who kill them later on. (Rev. xix. 20; xi. 13.)

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." (Ver. 8.) So deadly is the enmity against these faithful witnesses, that instead of receiving an ordered burial, their bodies are left where they fall in the street of the great city. This is clearly Jerusalem. Three things are said of it. First it is called spiritually by the name of Sodom, secondly by the name of Egypt, and thirdly it is designated as the place where our Lord was crucified. Even in Isaiah's day, so gross was the corruption of the

city, that the daughter of Zion is addressed as Sodom (Isa. i. 1-15), and now, many hundreds of years later, her character had not changed. Egypt would denote that Jerusalem, where God's people should have walked in holiness and liberty, had sunk down to the worldliness and bondage of the country out of which He had so graciously delivered them. "Where also our [or their] Lord was crucified" brings before us the terrible guilt that had come upon them through the shedding of His blood. In short three things characterised the people, corruption, worldliness, and emnity. And they treat the witnesses as they treated their Lord. Israel and the world would not submit to the Lordship of Christ in the past, and the mass of the Jews and the Gentiles will refuse it again in the future. Hence the richly merited judgments of God.

"And they [men—J. N. D.'s Trans.] of the people [or peoples] and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." (Vers. 9, 10.) Not content with destroying the witnesses, they leave their bodies to corrupt in the street (a terrible witness to their wickedness), and refuse them, as said, an ordered burial. This lasts for three days and a half; or a day for every year of three hundred and sixty-five days of their living testimony. Their corpses openly witness against their enemies. *The earth dwellers,*

the class so often referred to, whose minds are wholly centred upon the earth, glad to be rid of men whose presence and testimony torment them, rejoice at their downfall (are full of delight), and bestow mutual gifts.\*

“And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which 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.” (Vers. 11, 12.) The power of their foes is limited. Divine power intervenes at the close of the three days and a half. To the great amazement and fear of the onlookers, the Spirit of life from God suddenly enters into them, and they stand upon their feet. Where was the delight and merriment of their enemies then? This is followed by the two witnesses hearing a great voice from heaven inviting them to that glorious sphere. “Come up hither.” Their eternal portion is a heavenly one. Like their blessed Master whom they had so faithfully served, loving not their lives unto death, they ascend to heaven in a cloud. All takes place in the sight of their astonished enemies. They had seen them when testifying, when killed, when lying upon the streets of the city, when

\* We fear there are many in this present day of grace, who, whilst professing to celebrate the birth and the crucifixion of Christ at Christmas and Easter, and sending gifts one to another, are far from Him in heart, and refuse any true testimony on the part of His servants, to the glory of His holy Name. May God give all such who may read these lines to pay earnest heed to the above solemn scripture!

standing, after death, with the Spirit of life in them; and now they see them ascending to heaven, the sphere to which God had called them. How great and conclusive is their guilt!

“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: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.” (Ver. 13.) The same hour that these witnesses stand upon their feet in the Spirit of life out of death and ascend to heaven, the death knell, so to speak, sounds for many in the guilty city, where they had been slain. It is signalled by a great earthquake. It is a manifest interference of divine power. The tenth part of the city comes down with a terrible crash. Seven thousand names of men are slain. God knows every name. He is wise and discriminating in judgment as in all else. And the remainder are affrighted. They feared, as they beheld God’s judgment fall on others, lest a like fate should befall themselves. But, alas, it is not that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. (Prov. ix. 10.) There is no fear unto repentance. The testimony already borne before them was in relation to God’s rights in the earth. They had heard it, and had refused it. God publicly vindicates His witnesses in a most marvellous way by the fearful visitation of an earthquake upon their enemies. But the only effect upon these hardened men is that they give glory to *the God of heaven*. Their hearts would still keep Him at a distance. They refuse any approach to them or any thought of His rights

over them. They will not have Him as *the God of the earth*.

“The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.” (Ver. 14.) That which we have been considering is included under the sixth trumpet. It is part of the second of the three woes, bringing us historically to the end of the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week, the close of the present age. “Behold, the *third* woe [the seventh trumpet] cometh *quickly*.” It succeeds immediately the second, and introduces the age or world to come.

“And 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.” This third woe, the last of the seven trumpets, ushers in the day of the Lord, so widely treated of in the pages of the Old Testament. It is the moment when Christ shall appear, assert His rights and take possession of the kingdom. Deep interest is called forth in heaven. Great voices are heard there. They are occupied with what is happening in relation to this world. John hears them, saying, “The kingdom of the world of our Lord and of his Christ is come.” This is the more correct rendering. The goal to which all prophetic testimony points is here reached at last. God who hitherto has ruled in secret is about to rule openly. The whole world is about to come under the sway of Christ, before whom every other king shall fall down. He will come and sit upon the throne of His glory, wear the crown and wield the sceptre for ever and ever, (or, unto the ages of ages).

“And the four and twenty elders which sat before God on their seats [or thrones], fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which 'art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.” (Ver. 16, 17.) The heavenly saints are deeply interested in this wonderful event and its attendant circumstances, when the world's great day of sorrow shall be over and Christ shall judge and reign. They enter into the mind of heaven and gladly recognize God's glory and His righteous ways. Prostrating themselves before Him, they worship Him, the source and author of all this wondrous blessing. Addressing Him who is Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, they render thanks to Him who is the ever existing One, and who ever was, without beginning. The words “art to come” are not in the original. The ground of their thanksgiving is, that He hath taken His great power and hath reigned. It is a subject of great joy to those who owe everything to Him, that His rights are no longer refused, but all brought to bow before His great power and righteous rule.

“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.” (Ver. 18.)

All judgment is committed unto the Son. (John v. 22.) This remarkable and comprehensive verse

embraces the whole scope of judgment and reward at His hand, and carries us down to the end of all things. To understand it we must bear in mind that Christ's reign will last a thousand years and that it is ushered in and closed by judgment. Hence, though the different acts of judgment and reward are all grouped together here, it does not follow that they are executed at one and the same time. Different classes become the subject of His dealings at different times and in different circumstances. First, we read, the nations are angry. Having thrown off the yoke of the Lord's authority, destroyed all true religion, and lapsed into apostasy (of which we shall see more further on), the selfwill of the nations is paramount, and they are angry against the Lord and each other, and resent any interference. But it adds, "thy wrath is come." The Lord Himself will be angry, and execute His sure and righteous judgment on the quick. (2 Tim. iv. 1; 1 Pet. iv. 5.) It passes on next "to the time of the dead, that they should be judged." This is the judgment of the great white throne, that which will take place at the close of the kingdom. (Rev. xx. 11, 12.) It embraces all who have died in unbelief from the fall onwards right through all the cycles of time. All will be raised to judgment and judged according to their works. (Rev. xx. 12, 13.) Three classes are next mentioned: His servants the prophets, the saints, and them that fear His name, small and great, as receiving reward from Him according to their goodness and faithfulness, fruit of faith. And the passage concludes with the threat of destruction against those who destroy the

earth. The Judge, the judgment, and the day of judgment are all appointed. (John v. 22; Acts xvii. 31; Heb. ix. 27.) He is strong, who executeth His word.

The closing verse of chapter xi. commences a fresh line of things. As so often in the Revelation, we must turn back from that which we have been tracing in the previous verses of the chapter. From here on we get further details, and from another point of view, of things which will transpire during the last half week.

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.” (Chap. xi. 19.) In chapter iv. a door was opened in heaven. Here the temple of God is opened in the same sphere. And being opened, the ark of the testament (or, rather, covenant) is seen. Now the ark of the covenant of old was the Lord’s, and His ways with His people Israel were bound up with it, the temple on earth, the altar, and the worshippers, as we have seen, having been measured and set apart for God. (Chap. xi. 1.) The ark of the covenant is seen in heaven, as God is about to unroll many of His future ways with them before the eyes of the prophet. And again we get the solemn tokens of God’s judgment in view of that which is about to be accomplished for the vindication of His glory. Great hail, figurative of a tremendous downpour of God’s wrath, is added to those already mentioned in chapter viii. 5 and chapter iv. 5.

## CHAPTER XII.

IT would have been better if those who divided our English bibles into chapters and verses, had put the last verse of chapter xi. at the commencement of chapter xii., for it is in connection with its contents.

“And a great sign was seen in the heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and being with child she cried, [being] in travail, and in pain to bring forth.” (Ver. 1.) Although this great sign was seen in heaven in the vision, it does not follow that all the events which are brought forward or symbolised have their actual accomplishment there. It is clear from what the prophet saw that some of them take place on earth, others in heaven, both being in certain relation the one to the other. In examining the passage carefully, it is not difficult to perceive that this “sign” is a figure of the nation of Israel. The woman is clothed with the sun. Israel had been invested with light and power and authority from God. The moon, which illustrates derivative and reflected light, is under her feet. The crown of twelve stars upon her head seems to denote the twelve sons of Israel, heads of the twelve tribes.

Verse 2 speaks of travail and pain before deliverance, and doubtless points on to the hour of Jacob's trouble and pain before the Deliverer comes out

of Zion. A remarkable passage in Isaiah lxvi. 7-9 may shed light upon it. It says there, that "*Before* she travailed, she brought forth; *before* her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing?" And here in chapter xii. 5, where a man-child is born, he is caught up to heaven, and the passage goes on to speak of the future in relation to the nation prior to His reappearance. When Zion travails in the future, she will bring forth her children. (Isa. lxvi. 8.) And they shall be delivered and blessed under Christ. This scripture links the past and future concerning Christ and Israel together in such a remarkable manner, that it is not easy to discern the true spiritual import of some of the details.

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." (Vers. 3, 4.) The great red dragon is Satan in his draconic character, in relation to the great imperial and infidel power which is to be set up on the earth, the Roman empire. The seven heads are seven mountains, the well-known seven hills upon which Rome, the capital city of the empire, is built, and which becomes the centre of Satan's power on the earth. And there are seven kings or ruling powers. There are seven crowns, or diadems, upon the seven heads. The word "there" is a doubtful rendering. The seven

heads have a double signification. (Rev. xvii. 9, 10.) The ten horns are ten kings, who will have power as kings in the countries which will comprise the empire in its last phase, when revived. (Rev. xvii. 12.) The dragon draws the third part of those prominent men who hitherto have been set up as lights, to shine morally among men, and casts them down to the level of the earth. The dragon stands before the woman (Israel) which was ready to be delivered. He is bent on devouring her child as soon as it is born. The gospel narrative shews us how he wrought through Herod the king to destroy Christ. (Matt. ii. 16.) But He was preserved till the will of God was accomplished. Both Jew and Gentile combined finally to put Him to death.

“And she brought forth a man [or male] child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.” (Ver. 5.) When the fulness of time was come Christ was born into the world, a male son (New Trans.), who was to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. This latter is yet to be accomplished. Refused at His first appearing (passing over all that befel Him at the hand of man in His rejection and death), Israel’s child (the child born, the Son given, Isa. ix. 6) was “*caught up*” to God. The same expression is used in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-18 in relation to His heavenly saints. “And to his throne.” It brings before us Christ’s present position as the glorified One, seated at the right hand of God’s power, when all things were given into His hand. (John iii. 35; Eph. i. 20-22.) And it links up with Him the future ways of God with

Israel. Sufficient is said to connect the past and future history together.

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three-score days.” (Ver. 6.) Prior to the casting down of the dragon to earth, the description of which follows, and the most terrible period of trial and suffering in man’s history, God in mercy thinks of His people, and reveals His care of them at that awful hour. The woman flees for safety into the wilderness, a sphere where every natural resource is lacking. But the same faithful God who led His people through the wilderness of old, and sustained them by His own wondrous and unfailing resources, will prepare a place for them. And there He will nourish them every day of the period of Jacob’s trouble. They will be preserved and nourished twelve hundred and sixty days, the whole time of the dragon’s rule on earth.

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.” (Vers. 7, 8.) Many, through preconceived notions and faulty early training, have very erroneous ideas both about heaven and about Satan. If any of our readers, instead of gathering their thoughts from scripture, have only one sphere called heaven before their minds, and vainly imagine that Satan is now a king in hell, we are not surprised at their having a difficulty in understanding this sudden introduction of war with the dragon in heaven. It is all-

important to remember that there are several spheres which are called heaven in scripture. There is the firmament (Gen. i. 6-8); the heavenly places (Eph. i. 3; ii. 6); the third heaven (2 Cor. xii. 2); the heaven of heavens (1 Kings viii. 27).<sup>\*</sup> Other spheres have been affected by sin, besides this habitable earth. There is spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. (Eph. vi. 12.) Satan is the prince of the power of the air. Is it needful to add that there is no sin in the third heavens, or the heaven of heavens, the immediate presence of God. (2 Cor. xii. 2; 1 Kings viii. 27.) When Christ said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke x. 18), He was speaking prophetically. His actual fall comes later. He is not yet in the bottomless pit (Rev. xx. 1-3), nor in the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 10.) He will be later on. At present the whole world lies in the wicked one. (1 John v. 19.) He is its god. (2 Cor. iv. 4.) He has access to one of the spheres called heaven. (Job. i. 2.) He rules the world, but God is above all and over-ruling, and Satan cannot enter where He is. And God will cause him to be cast out of his present position. It will be accomplished by angelic instrumentality.

"There was war in heaven." A terrible war it will be. On the one side Michael, the archangel,† the great prince which standeth for the children of Daniel's people, that is, Israel (Dan. xii. 1), "and his angels." On the other the dragon. The hour has arrived for him to be cast out. Michael and

\* The third heaven and the heaven of heavens may possibly be the same sphere,

† There is only one archangel spoken of in scripture.

his angels take the offensive. The dragon fights and his angels with him, but in vain. The power against him is from God, and he cannot stand. He prevails not. Our Lord had said the gates of hades should not prevail against His assembly. (Matt. xvi. 18.) And that assembly having been brought safely through Satan's world, and landed in glory, to be presented by Christ, to Himself, as His bride, the enemy must be cast out from the heavenly sphere that he had hitherto occupied. His and his angels' place is found no more in heaven, but the contention of good and evil will continue a while on earth, issuing in the final triumph of Christ.

“And 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.” (Ver. 9.) It is important and instructive to notice how the great enemy is spoken of in this verse. The four names by which he is known in scripture are employed, from which we gather that this awful and powerful being, the prince and god of this world, will exercise all his power on the earth during the last half-week in this fourfold character. He will put forth draconic, serpent-like, devilish, and Satanic power during his short sojourn here. The same four names are mentioned again when his power comes to an end. Then he will be bound in the abyss, shewing that he will be completely powerless in every way during the thousand years' reign of Christ. (Rev. xx. 3.) At the close he is loosed for a little season, but only his titles of “Satan” and “the devil” are used. It is also to be noticed that

the word "great" is added again when he is cast out. He will exercise great power in connection with the earth. And the word "old," or "ancient," is also employed in relation to the serpent. He is the same who led to the fall of man when he intruded in serpent's guise in Eden.

He is also said to be the one who deceives the whole habitable world. This great power of deception explains, although it does not excuse, the carelessness and indifference of men in regard to Christ and their salvation. He is the god of this world, and blinds the minds of them which believe not, which, combined with the deceitfulness of the human heart, and of sin, keeps man in complete darkness. This wicked being is cast out into the earth and all his angels with him. His is a downward course from his first absolute and irretrievable fall onwards. He lost his marvellous heavenly position in the economy of God (Ezek. xxviii. 11-19) and became what he now is. Through this conflict in heaven he will be cast down to earth (Rev. xii. 9-13); later on he will be bound in the abyss (Rev. xx. 1-3); finally, he will be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. xx. 10.) This latter is prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt. xxv. 41.)

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for 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. Therefore rejoice, ye

heavens, and ye that dwell in them. 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." The language of this loud voice would suggest that it is that of the heavenly saints. It speaks of "our God," and of "our brethren," who are still upon the earth. It is not yet the moment for the establishment of Christ's rule over the earth, but it refers to the establishment of the kingdom in relation to its heavenly sphere, for there will be both a heavenly and an earthly. God shall head up all things in Christ, both in heaven and in earth. (Eph. i. 10.) Hence the voice cries, "*Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.*" (New Trans.) The enemy's opposition on high to the salvation of God, the exercise of His power and the establishing of His rule ceases. Satan is cast out. The authority of God's Christ is paramount henceforth where Satan had opposed. Already powerless to accuse God's heavenly saints before Him, those who had been justified, reconciled, saved, and taken into favour through and in Christ, Satan had been persistently accusing, day and night, the saints witnessing on earth under the fresh dealings of God (of which we have already spoken, after the heavenly saints are seen enthroned in chapters iv. and v.) until his fall. The voice proclaims that the accuser of "*our brethren*" is cast down. He accused *them* (not us). It is not a question of Christians. And *they* (not *we*) overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the

word of their testimony. They will know for themselves, as we do on earth to-day, the infinite value of the precious blood of the Lamb. Confident and assured as to their future blessing, they announce His word in faithful testimony, and are willing to sacrifice their lives for His sake. "They loved not their lives unto death." They suffer martyrdom rather than deny the One to whom they owe all.

"Therefore rejoice [or be full of delight], ye heavens," cries the voice, "and ye that dwell in them." The announcement concerning the kingdom, the overthrow of the accuser, and the faithful testimony of God's fresh witnesses, become the joy of the heavens, and of those who dwell there.

But that which causes joy in heaven brings terrible retribution upon the world of the ungodly. "Woe to the earth and to the sea!" Enraged at his overthrow, and knowing that he has but a short time ere he will be bound in the abyss, he will exercise all his power and malignity against men both within the ordered and unordered spheres. The world having refused every overture of God's mercy up till this moment will suffer woe, by reason of the casting out of the devil to the earth. They will not have God and Christ, but choose rather Satan and his man. The next chapter gives us details of the awful state of things which will ensue through his power and wiles.

The first thing the dragon does, when come to earth, is to persecute the Jewish nation. "When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-

child." It is in his draconic character\* that the devil does this. He has always been a persecuting spirit, using men as his instruments. Here it is not a question of the Jewish witnesses, but of the nation. The Jews as such are the objects of his malice.

But God having renewed His links, as we have seen, with His ancient people, bestows upon them the means of protection and support. "To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle." In the vision of chapter viii. 13 it was a flying eagle which utters the woes upon the inhabitants of the earth; here the two wings of the great eagle are given to God's people to protect them whilst these woes are being executed. Through this power, supplied in the mercy of God, the woman is enabled to fly into the wilderness, into her place. This, we judge, is the sphere we have noticed in verse 6, and the place providentially prepared of God. There she will be nourished for a time, times, and half a time from the face of the serpent. A time represents a year. It is the same period of three years and a half, referred to as a thousand two hundred and threescore days in verse 6. They find themselves, so to speak, face to face with the serpent. But all his wiles are powerless against those whom God protects. This protection is afforded by providential means, as the following verses shew.

"And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her

\* The devil is viewed as the dragon in relation to his power established on the earth during the crisis at the end of this age, when corruption, idolatry, blasphemy, &c., came to a head, coupled with terrible persecution of all who witness for God and refuse His authority.

to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." (Vers. 15, 16.) The serpent sets in motion what appears to be a popular movement against the Jews. In the original the flood, or river, is said to be behind them. He seeks to get them carried away. It is not the first time by many that this persecuted people has been subject to movements of a similar character; this will probably be on a more general scale. But in the vision the earth helps the woman. It would seem that the fixed government of the ordered sphere of the earth comes to the people's aid, and the movement is frustrated. The earth opens her mouth in the figure and swallows up the flood; consequently the draconic power is nullified. The movement dies down and disappears.

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Ver. 17.) Frustrated in his design to overwhelm and destroy God's ancient people, the enraged dragon turns against the remnant of the woman's seed. These are the truly godly ones in the midst of the apostate nation. They keep God's commandments from the heart, and are not content with a mere external observance. And they have the blessed testimony of Jesus, in whom all those commandments found their perfect expression. The dragon makes war against them. In the following chapter, we find the allied power of two beasts his instruments in carrying out his deadly designs.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“AND I stood upon the sand of the sea, and 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 name of blasphemy. And 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 the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” The prophet standing on the sand of the sea beholds a beast. It is the same as the terrible beast of Daniel vii. 7, the fourth of the four great empires which wield power during the times of the Gentiles. It rises up out of the sea. That is, it comes into power out of a vast, surging mass of revolutionary elements. It has seven heads and ten horns, like the great red dragon in chapter xii. 3, which shews the close connection between the two. But with the beast there are ten crowns on the ten horns, whereas with the dragon, as we have seen, the crowns are on the heads, the double signification of which we have sought to shew. This beast sets forth the future revived Roman empire. It will have a ten kingdom form, the beast being over them (chap. xvii. 11-13), and thus a mimicry of Christ's rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. Sometimes the term “beast” is employed to set forth the person of the individual who wields the power at the head of the empire, at others to set forth the empire itself; just as one

might speak at one moment of an emperor who wields the power of one of the great modern empires to-day, and at another of the empire itself. We might, for instance, say Germany or Russia went to war, or the Kaiser or the Czar went to war. We should be equally understood.

Next, it is stamped on the page of scripture as a blasphemous beast: "Upon its heads *names of blasphemy.*" It makes no pretence to religion, either orthodox or unorthodox. It is altogether blasphemous, a power which utterly refuses all acknowledgment of the one true God, and of His Son Jesus Christ and His holy word. He *openly* blasphemes. (Ver. 5.) Each of the seven heads bears a blasphemous name. Daniel's vision of four beasts in chapter vii. helps us to the understanding of the *characteristics of this blasphemous* beast in verse 2. It is a well-known fact that when the Roman empire of old overcame the world, conquering many kingdoms and forming them into one vast empire, the Romans found it impossible to alter the moral character and traits of these peoples, or to eradicate many of the customs, traditions and manners which had characterised them previously. Many of them had for hundreds of years formed part of the empires which preceded the Roman, namely, the Grecian, Medo-Persian, and Babylonian powers. Now in Daniel's vision the first of these powers is seen as a terrible beast; the second, as a leopard; the third, as a bear; and the last, as a lion. Hence, when the Roman empire rose to power, she retained within the sphere of her rule many of the characteristics of the other three

beasts. She was like a leopard (the Grecian power), had feet as a bear (the Medo-Persian), a mouth as the mouth of a lion (the Babylonian). With the swiftness of the leopard, the unwieldy and savage character of the bear, the noble but predatory character of the lion, well might she in her turn be called "a terrible beast." It has still these characteristics when John sees it in the vision coming out of the sea. The dragon gives the beast three things: his power, his seat (or throne) and great authority. When Satan offered these things to Christ, God's faithful and true witness, He absolutely refused them. But the beast gladly receives them at his hand, and so he practically wields the sceptre of the dragon in the world.

"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" (Vers. 3, 4.) We have seen that the seven heads represent from one point of view the different ruling powers of the Roman empire in its past history. One of these was the imperial, that of the Cæsars. Now one of his heads was *as it were* wounded to death. The universal imperial power received a wound through which it fell, apparently never to rise again. But here we learn that the deadly wound is healed.\* Imperialism in widespread form will be revived in Europe. The

\* Something else may also possibly take place, that will answer to the healing of the wound, which will make the world wonder.

beast will sit upon an imperial throne with power given to him by Satan, having sway over ten kings. All their power will be concentrated in this man. The world to-day is sighing and crying for a man. God's Man, Jesus, they will not have, in spite of their religious (so-called christian) profession. But the mass will gladly accept the beast, Satan's man. The human mind gets easily intoxicated with power, glory and success. Great will be the power of this man (for it is of Satanic origin), great the outward glitter of his high throne (for it is that of the dragon), great and widespread will be his authority. This is not the man who is called the antichrist. This latter will be a Jew and corresponds with the second beast of this chapter. (Ver. 11.) We shall have much to say of him as we proceed. But the first beast, the one we have been speaking of, is a Gentile. The two are intimately linked together. Both have one policy. They are the heads of Gentile and Jewish apostasy, and are anti-christian, anti-Jewish, infidels, and blasphemous. Like Pilate and Herod, who (previously at enmity) became friends together in the rejection and death of Christ, so the enmity of Gentile and Jew in these two leaders will cease, and they too will be heartily one in the refusal of both His divine and human rights.

And all the world, or rather the whole earth, will wonder after the beast. His exaltation, power and glory will fill men with admiration, but they will find out to their bitter sorrow and pain the awful hardness of Satan's rule. Completely blinded and duped, men's infidel hearts will not only refuse all

worship to God and His Christ, but without conscience they will openly worship the dragon who gives power to the beast, and the beast himself. The boasted enlightenment of men will end in apostasy and in the worship of the devil. And they cry, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" Christ, God's incomparable One, is utterly forgotten. The beast, Satan's great imperial ruler, becomes man's ideal! He will have practically the whole power (military and naval) of the ten kings at his disposal. They have one mind, and give their power and strength to him. (Chap. xvii. 13.) Who indeed could make war against the head of such a vast and powerful confederacy, with the power of the dragon behind it all!

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." (Vers. 5, 6.) A month is given to him, doubtless by the dragon, and he speaks great things and blasphemies. Men delight in a tongue that can utter great things. Comparatively few trouble whether the utterances are suited to the ear of God. The beast combines blasphemies with them. Whilst the Holy Ghost and the church are here below there is a restraint. But when the devil is cast down, and his men in power, the present restraint will have ceased. Except for the witnessing remnant of Jews, and any who come to a knowledge of God through them, there will be

no deterrent voice. And these the beast will seek to destroy, as the next verse shews. (Ver. 7.) The beast will be openly blasphemous, and approved of men! In the mercy of God the period of his power will be a comparatively short one; lasting for the last half week, or forty and two months,\* but men will go to dreadful lengths in blasphemy, wickedness, violence and corruption during his sway. The beast opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, and it takes a threefold form. He blasphemeth the holy name of the great Creator and Preserver of all things; he blasphemeth His holy dwelling-place; and he blasphemeth them that dwell in heaven, the saints who, refusing Satan's sway, bowed to God, received His testimony by faith, and were already reaping in heavenly glory the blessed and eternal fruits of redemption.

“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Vers. 7, 8.) The power to make war with the saints then on earth is given to him, and he is successful. He gets the victory over them. And he will wield the sceptre of universal dominion in the sphere of the revived Roman empire. It is *given* power, and all kindreds,

\* As the prince that shall make the covenant with Israel, he has power for seven years, the period of its duration (Dan. ix. 27); but it is only for the last half of it that, energised by Satan, he comes out in the character of the beast.

tongues and nations come beneath his sway. The earth-dwellers are again distinguished. *All* of them shall worship the beast. Their names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb, for so it should read. The language used here shews again most clearly that there is a class of saints different from those of the present day. These latter were chosen in Christ *before* the foundation of the world; the names of those who do homage to the beast are said not to be written in the book of life *from* the foundation of the world, implying that there will be saints at that day whose names are written therein. The names of those against whom the beast wages war are doubtless those whose names were written thus.

“If any man have an ear, let him hear. 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.” These familiar words here repeated, “If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear,” shews that all should be concerned as regards this terrible being, the beast, and his actions as here described. Many are deeply concerned as to modern politics, but notwithstanding all the wisdom of the greatest minds, and all the varied ways of the governments of the world, what God has foretold must surely and shortly come to pass. (Chap. i. 1; xxii. 6.) Things are clearly working towards this goal. The European concert is a familiar term to many. Some six great powers are constantly seeking to act together. Eventually there will be ten.

We do not suggest here which they will be.\* But we know full well that nothing can be a success without a head. The Roman empire will be revived in a ten-kingdom form, and in order for all to work together there must be a head. This paves the way for the beast. It will be Satan's kingdom, the beast being the visible head. It is a great mercy for the Christian to know that, through the coming of the Lord for His people (1 Thess. iv. 15-18), the true church will be kept out of this terrible hour of trial.

This part of chapter xiii. closes with judgment being pronounced in a twofold way. "If any one leads into captivity," captivity will be his portion. "If any one shall kill with the sword," with the sword that one *must* be killed. Satan, the leader of all who lead men captive (2 Tim. ii. 26; Rev. xii. 7), will be bound and a captive in the abyss. If any one fights and kills instead of yielding, like the One whose kingdom is not of this world (John xviii. 36), in the just government of God that one *must* be killed. The believer is called to walk by faith and to trust God, who will support him. The testimony of God too often suffers through its advocates turning to human and military power for its maintenance instead of counting alone upon Him. It is very testing to refrain from meeting violence with violence, to suffer wrong rather than resent it, to return good for evil, even at the cost of life. But this was the spirit of the blessed Master, whom

\* The grouping of power will doubtless be different in the coming day. For instance, Russia will clearly be apart from the revived Roman empire in its ten-kingdom form.

His servants represent. Hence it closes by adding, "Here is the patience and faith of the saints." "If *my* kingdom were of *this* world, then would my servants fight."

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." (Ver. 11.) John beheld a second beast. It does not say when he comes up, but whence. Probably soon after the first. He comes up out of the earth. The first rises up from the sea, where, as we have seen, a state of agitation and revolution exists. His great power produces apparently for the moment a more ordered and settled state of things externally and governmentally. Hence the second comes up out of *the earth*. "He had two horns like a lamb." This shews that he is an imitation of the Lamb of God. He is the false Messiah, the one of whom Christ said, "another shall come in his own name" (John v. 43), *the antichrist*. Many mistake him for the Lamb, through the deceit and blinding power of Satan; but once his voice is heard, his true character comes out. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Matt. xii. 34.) He spake as a dragon. It was the voice of that mighty arch-deceiver.

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." (Ver. 12.) This verse shews very clearly the close alliance which will exist between these two powers. We must again remind our readers that the term beast represents both an

individual and a vast system, political or politico-religious, of which such an one is the head. This second terrible being exercises all the power of the first, which is draconic in its origin, and causes the earth-dwellers to worship him. The tendency to-day is towards democracy, socialism, and republicanism. But just as in the course of the French revolution, when men, after struggling with violence and bloodshed for what they called liberty, eventually settled down under the iron heel and successful military power of Napoleon, so will it be in this coming day. The beast having come to the forefront out of a state of revolution and anarchy, men, under the influence of the second beast, will worship the first, whose deadly wound is healed. That is, deceived by the dragon, they bow down to *imperialism in the person of his man at the head of the revived empire*. It shews the vain character of human politics and religion, and how easily the world is influenced by the dominant power of the moment.

“And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth 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; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.” (Vers. 13, 14.) We have a remarkable instance in the Old Testament of fire coming down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, by which they were led to own that Jehovah was God. (1 Kings xviii. 30-40.) By Satanic

power the second beast does great wonders and miracles. He too is enabled to make fire come down. Men are deceived by it to believe Satan's lie. Christ was a Man approved of God by miracles, wonders and signs. And this false Christ has power to imitate these evidences, so that the dwellers on earth are duped, and are ready to make an image to the first beast, which had a wound by a sword and did live.

“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and 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.” (Vers. 15-17.) We have a foreshadowing of this character of things when the times of the Gentiles first commenced. Nebuchadnezzar, the head of the Babylonian empire, to whose hand the kingly power was transferred in the government of God, when Israel had failed (Dan. ii. 37), saw in a dream a remarkable image, the meaning of which was interpreted by the prophet Daniel. Learning that the head of gold represented his own great power, he made an image all of gold, and commanded all men, at the sound of music, under penalty of death, to fall down and worship it. (Dan. ii.) Here the second beast causes deceived worshippers to make the image. And then, by Satanic power, he gives life (or breath) to the

image, so that it speaks. And he causes all that refuse to do homage to the image of the beast to be killed. Moreover, he causes all classes of men, from the highest to the lowest, to receive a mark either on the right hand or on their forehead. No one can escape; the great as well as the small of this world, those who are rich and living in luxury as well as those who are poor in this world's goods, free citizens of standing as well as those in bond-service, all alike, whether they live by the power of their minds or by their hands, must bow. They must bear either the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name. The world's prosperity depends upon its commerce, but no one in that day will be allowed either to buy or sell without the mark. It is easy to conceive what a fearful tyranny and terrible trial it will be. To refuse to do homage to the idol will entail death; to refuse to bear the brand of the beast, practically the mark of being a servant of the devil, is at the cost of being refused to trade, and that also will entail death.

These things are details of what will transpire on the earth when the now fast-ripening apostasy shall have come to a head, and Satan's men shall be in power. Of the second beast viewed as the wicked one it is said in 2 Thessalonians ii. 9-12, "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And 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."

Though not brought out in Revelation xiii., it may help our readers, before we pass on, to better understand the nature of the close alliance between these two beasts, if we turn to two Old Testament scriptures which speak of the covenant between them (which we have already had occasion to refer to briefly in passing). In Daniel ix. it says that the prince that shall come (of verse 26) shall confirm the covenant with many (*i.e.*, of the Jews) for one week (of seven years). This prince is the same as the beast of Revelation xiii. 1, the head of the revived Roman empire in its ten-kingdom form. In Isaiah xxviii. 14 we read, "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement," etc. The wicked one, the antichrist, will be at the head of these scornful men ruling at Jerusalem. It appears that the Jews having returned to their land in great numbers and with great wealth will be exposed to the captivity and attack of the north-eastern powers. Hence, with antichrist at their head, they make this covenant with the first beast, the great prince who is the false king of kings, having ten kings under him, to be protected by his great military power. They thus trust in an arm of flesh instead of in Jehovah their God. And in the middle of the week, Satan having been cast to earth in a great rage, both beasts come out in their true colours,

and the awful state of things depicted in Revelation xiii. is the result. In addition to this, and notwithstanding the covenant, the overflowing scourge, the Assyrian, or king of the north, passes through and devastates the land. It is the hour of Jacob's trouble. (Daniel ix. 27: "he shall make it desolate" should read "there shall be a desolator," the Assyrian.)

"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six." (Ver. 18.) This is an acknowledged difficult passage. The wisdom of God shines in all His ways. Understanding may be given in His grace, in the day when all these things shall be fulfilled. It is clear from the passage that the number six hundred and sixty-six is the number of a man.

Now we know that Christ the Son of God was a Man, sinless, perfect, holy. And this second beast is a man, Satan's mimicry, the antichrist, another that shall come in his own name. (John v. 43.) In that Christ was and is the Son, He could say, "I and my Father are one." And He wrought by the Holy Ghost on earth. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three divine Persons in the Godhead. *There is only one God. This being so*, in that we find such a close alliance between the dragon and the two beasts, it seems to set forth a Satanic anti-trinity, an imitation of the true. The number six hundred and sixty-six may possibly point to the threefold imperfection of Satan's mimicry. The two beasts are so closely allied

together, it is difficult sometimes to be sure which is spoken of. We judge that the two beasts, speaking broadly, are the imitation of the Father and the Son, and Satan the imitation of the Holy Ghost. The Jews attributed the power of the Holy Ghost through Christ to Beelzebub the prince of the devils. (Luke xi. 15.)

This thirteenth chapter of the Revelation shews that, notwithstanding all the boasted progress in civilisation, education and science of the twentieth century, men will throw off allegiance to God, and will end in worshipping the dragon, the beast, and the antichrist! (Chap. xiii. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.) It is further striking to notice that the Jews, notwithstanding all their misuse of their privileges, and consequent contempt of the Gentiles, will, at the close of their present history, form an alliance with them. They will unite together, like Herod and Pilate of old, in the rejection of Christ, the true God. And they will both receive and acknowledge the false Messiah, who shall set himself up as God (2 Thess. ii. 8-12), and his coadjutor the beast.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

THE fourteenth chapter is divided into seven sections: the triumphant Jewish remnant (vers. 1-5); the proclamation of the everlasting gospel (vers. 6, 7); the announcement of the fall of the mystic Babylon (ver. 8); and of judgment on the worshippers of the beast (vers. 9-12); the blessing of those who die in the Lord at that day (ver. 13); the harvest of the nations (vers. 14-16); the vintage of the vine of the earth (vers. 17-20).

Let us consider these seven sections in detail. "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." (Ver. 1.) It should read "the" Lamb. It is Christ. Not now viewed in the midst of the heavenly throne, but standing on the mount Sion, the centre of God's earthly ways, in the royal city, where David dwelt. It is a scene in relation to the earth. He is not alone, but *with Him* is a numerous company, one hundred and forty-four thousand. We must not confuse these with the one hundred and forty-four thousand of chapter vii. There they are out of the twelve tribes of Israel, as we have seen. These represent the preserved Jewish remnant, the firstfruits to God and the Lamb in relation to the age to come, the millennial earth. They have His name *and* the name of His Father written upon their foreheads.

Though omitted in the authorised English version, "His name" is added in the original. When Christ commissioned Mary after His resurrection to go to His brethren, He bade her say, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father," etc. (John xx. 17.) But rich as will be the blessing of this remnant of Jews associated with the Lamb on mount Sion, it falls short of this. They are openly recognised as His, and His Father's. But it does not say "*their Father's.*" The relation of this remnant is not so intimate as that of His brethren—Christians.

"And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." (Vers. 2-5.) The prophet hears a voice from, or out of, heaven. Two things characterise it. It is as the sound of many waters, majestic, impressive, and as the voice of a vast host of people (chap. xvii. 15), and loud as of a great thunder, it is widely heard. Then follows the beautiful and inspiring sound of a vast company of harpers harping with their harps. And the one

hundred and forty-four thousand sung (or sing) a new song. Joy fills the vast ranks of this fresh company of redeemed ones. In that they sing not only before the throne, but also before the four living creatures and the elders, it shews clearly that they are a different company from those represented by these latter. The song which they sing is known to them only. No other man could learn it. They are a company redeemed (or bought) from the earth. They have special privileges, but in relation to the earth. They are morally virgins, pure, and separated, free from all defilement. They are blessedly associated with the Lamb, following Him wheresoever He goes. They are the firstfruits unto God, and to the Lamb. The kingdom of God is shortly to be set up, and its administration will be in the hand of Him who died to redeem them. Others, both of the ten tribes and from among the Gentiles, will then be blessed under His sway, as we have seen in chapter vii., but these are the firstfruits. They are seen in this vision in the scene of His triumph. They are with the Lamb on mount Sion, the centre of His earthly government, when He shall have His rights. All liars will be cast into the lake of fire, but no guile (or lie) is found in the mouth of this happy company. Their lips are filled with His praise. Their song is probably analogous with Psalm cxlix. And they are without fault, or blameless, like the One whom they follow. The words "before the throne of God" are an interpolation.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach

unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, 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." (Vers. 6, 7.) This is the second section. It is an angelic announcement of the everlasting gospel. The character of the testimony differs greatly from the present one, namely, the gospel of God, of His glory, and of His grace. This latter has been introduced during the rejection and absence of Christ, closing with the translation to glory of those who are the subjects of grace. But here we are on the eve of the manifestation of Christ and of the establishment of the glory of His kingdom, which will be introduced by judgment, and shall endure to the end of time. It calls upon all in view of the solemn hour of judgment to fear God (which is the beginning of wisdom), to give Him glory (instead of to Satan and his agents), and to worship Him, who is the great Creator of the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters. It is announced first to the dwellers on earth (or to those *settled on* the earth, New Trans.). How far any will receive the testimony is another matter. The scripture is silent. It is also addressed to mankind at large—*every* nation, kindred, tongue and people.

'And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." (Ver. 8.) This is the third. Another angel announces the coming fall of

Babylon. The word Babylon proceeds from Babel, and signifies confusion. The great city of old, called by this name, is a shadow of the one referred to here. The former was a literal city, as men generally understand by that name. This latter must be looked at morally. It has been said to set forth European civilisation in its religious aspect. We shall have to say more about it further on. Here the angel simply announces her fall, alluding first to her greatness and secondly to her wickedness. Her ways affect all nations. Wrath against the truth, all nations are made to drink of her wine, and become intoxicated with the joy of fellowship with her awful corruptions.

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of her 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.” (Vers. 9-11.) In the previous chapter men are compelled to worship the blasphemous beast under penalty of persecution and death. Here all who worship him and his image become the subjects of the awful wrath of God. The language, partly figurative, could scarcely be more severe. Depend upon it, the execution of this judgment will be as terrible as the

language conveys. God will deal with false religion and overthrow Babylon. Many are already giving up all profession of Christianity, and lapsing into infidelity. In the dreadful and rapidly approaching day here depicted, when Satan's power is at its zenith on the earth, many will worship him and his instruments, the great anti-trinity of evil.

A fourfold punishment is threatened upon every one such. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and that poured without mixture into the cup of His indignation! And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone! The smoke of their torment goes up to the age ~~of~~ ages! And they have no respite day or night! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x. 31.) This awful torment is said to take place in the presence of (or before, New Trans.) the holy angels and of the Lamb. Even holy angels who gladly worship the Lamb, and the Lamb Himself who died for God's glory and for the salvation of men, stand in full harmony with the execution of His righteous wrath on men who trample His glory under foot, and worship His wicked and deadly enemies.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Ver. 12.) It is blessed to find, notwithstanding the widespread apostasy, and the awful pressure brought to bear upon men through Satanic power, that God has a people who will endure at all costs. Refusing Satan's lie, they keep the commandments of God, and the faith of

Jesus who died to deliver them (as well as us) from his power.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” (Ver. 13.) In this fifth division of the chapter a voice from heaven tells John to write, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” (Psa. cxvi. 15.) And thereupon follows an announcement of their blessedness. Many apply this scripture to saints of this present interval of grace. Doubtless *all* who died in the Lord are blessed. The Christian, absent from the body, is present with Him. And to depart to be with Christ is far better. (Phil. i. 23.) But John was told to write, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth*.” Saints who die in the Lord escape the pressure of that awful crisis and rest. Some will be preserved in the power and mercy of God until the close, delivered at Christ’s return to Sion and shall come into the earthly blessing of His kingdom. But those who die in the Lord are blessed from henceforth, and will also be raised to complete the first resurrection, and share with Him (and with us) in heavenly blessing. “Yea, saith the Spirit.” He confirms this promise from heaven. And He adds, “that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” They are released by death from severest conflict, and entering into rest come at once into blessing. They cease from their labours, to be at peace in the Lord. And their works which

follow them will be rewarded by their faithful Saviour and Lord in His day. (1 Tim. v. 25.)

“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud sat one 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 on the earth; and the earth was reaped.” (Vers. 14-16.) This sixth division presents to us the harvest of the earth. The seventh and last, the vintage. (Vers. 17-20.) First, John beholds “a white cloud,” the symbol of the presence of Jehovah. Upon it is seated one like unto the Son of man, Jesus in power. He wears a golden crown. He is the King of righteousness. He holds in His hand a sharp sickle. He is about to reap the harvest of the earth. All judgment is committed unto the Son. (John v. 22.) And the Father has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man. (John v. 27.) He executes discriminating judgment (Matt. xiii. 30), and having harvested the earth and brought His wheat into the garner, the heavenly saints (Luke iii. 17), He will take His throne and reign. He thrusts in the sickle at a command, delivered by a heavenly messenger proceeding from the temple of God. The time for the fulfilment of the prophetic word had arrived. The harvest of the earth is seen fully ripe. The One who at His first coming was refused His rights by His

own, and was unknown to the world, will then exercise separative judgment, assert His power, execute the will of God, judge His foes, bless His people, and fill the whole scene with the glory of His great and all-worthy name.

“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 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.” (Vers. 17-20.) The harvest of the earth is very widespread, taking in the nations. The vintage is limited to a smaller sphere, in connection with the apostate Jewish nation. Another angel came out of the temple, and the words are added, “which is in heaven,” shewing the source of the judgment demanded by the holiness of God. He, too, has a sharp sickle. Another angel comes from the altar. The brazen altar is typical of the cross of Christ. Upon that altar the sacrifices were offered, which are typical of Christ’s death. But man was responsible for His death. Hence the altar cries now for vengeance upon the guilty nation which took the lead in His rejection and crucifixion. This angel had power over fire.

“Our God is a consuming fire.” Infinite in holiness, He consumes what is contrary to His glory among His people. And His fiery judgment falls upon His enemies in the day of its execution. The angel who has power over it cries to the angel with the sharp sickle to thrust it in, and to gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. Israel is the vine that Jehovah took out of Egypt, and planted in the land of promise (Psa. lxxx. 8.) It was planted wholly a noble vine, a right seed; but instead of bearing fruit for God, it became a degenerate plant, of low stature, and brought forth wild grapes. (Jer. ii. 21; Ezek. xvii. 6.) Her grapes are now fully ripened, and the hour of vintage come. The clusters of grapes are now to be gathered. In connection with the harvest, the wicked among the nations are seen figuratively as bundles of tares. In connection with the vintage we get clusters or bunches of grapes. “And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth.” And he casts it into the great winepress of God’s wrath. It is a graphic picture of the execution of the long-threatened wrath of God. The hour of God’s holy judgment of His rebellious and guilty people has come. Wrath comes upon them to the uttermost. It seems to be the execution of God’s wrath upon the Jews in general, rather than the city of Jerusalem in particular. That is described elsewhere. (Zech. xiv. 1, 2.) Here it says that the winepress was trodden “*without the city.*” Fearful carnage ensues. “Blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles.” It appears to convey the thought of an army of

horsemen treading everything down before them, until they are wading practically in a sea of blood. This extends to a space of sixteen hundred furlongs. The length of the land of Israel is about eleven hundred. This awful judgment includes probably the Lord's vengeance in Idumæa (or Edom), where the descendants of Esau settled. Possibly other nations around may be included. We read in Isaiah lxiii., "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? . . . I have *trodden the winepress* alone. . . . I will *tread them* in mine anger, and *trample them* in my fury . . . For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

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## CHAPTER XV.

“AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” (Ver. 1.) Next John beholds another sign in heaven. It is great and marvellous. He had seen the breaking of the seven seals of the roll of judgment, counsels and mysteries of God. He had heard the loud announcement of the seven trumpets. Now he sees seven angels having the *seven last* plagues. As we enter somewhat into the detail, we shall see there is a strong analogy between them and the plagues which fell upon Egypt in the days of Moses. In these seven plagues the fury of God is completed. The prophet has written of the Lord, “When thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isa. xxvi. 9.) Many have buoyed themselves up with the vain thought that the world will be converted and learn righteousness through the preaching of the gospel. Satan delights to blind men, and to hide from them, if possible, the fact that the Lord’s kingdom will be ushered in with judgment. Judgments will precede and also accompany His public manifestation and intervention. These seven plagues, the completion of God’s fury, carry us close up to the Lord’s own appearing.

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled

with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." (Ver. 2.) The prophet again sees a sea of glass, but it is mingled with fire. We are introduced to a sphere where no washing is required and where no judgment can ever enter. A vast company is standing upon it. Who are they? Apparently the faithful in the hour of tribulation. They had been in the midst of the awful scenes attendant on Satan's day, when his men were in power. Refusing to bow to the beast, or to his image, or to receive the number of his name, they were supported of God, and had overcome. They issue victorious from the deadly conflict, and are seen in the vision standing in triumph upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, with the harps of God, ready to sound His glory and praise. In the hour of their severe trial, they had kept themselves pure, and had suffered. But that day is over, and they stand with a sea of glass mingled with fire beneath their feet.

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints [or nations]. 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." (Vers. 3, 4.) This triumphant company bursts out in song, but it is one of a very different character from the new song that the heavenly saints sing around the

throne of God in heaven. It carries one's thoughts back, on the one hand, to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and to the song that Moses, the servant of God, and that people sang on the banks of the Red Sea; and, on the other, to the work of redemption wrought by the Lamb of God in His finished work upon the cross. There is the joyful recognition of the great and marvellous works of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, and of His justice and truth displayed in His ways. He is addressed as King, not of saints, but of nations. And it looks on to the day when all shall be compelled to bow before Him. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" The fear of the Lord will be universal in that day. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, and glory far and wide redound to His name. He is never viewed as the King of saints. It is a mis-rendering of the original. But He is the King of nations. And this redeemed company, having refused Satan's man, the false king, will gladly sing the praises of the true King. He is holy, and they will own it, and all nations shall come and worship before Him, for His righteousness (not judgments) will have been made manifest. "All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." (Psa. lxxii. 11.) "It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts," etc. (Zech. xiv. 16-19.) His righteousness will be made manifest both in judgment and in blessing. As King, He shall reign in righteousness; and

justice and judgment shall be the habitation of His throne.

“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.” (Vers. 5, 6.) The temple is the house itself (and everywhere in the Revelation, New Trans.). It is in heaven, and is now opened. The One who dwells there in His holiness is the same whose glory dwelt of old in the tabernacle of witness in the midst of His people. Here He is about to vindicate His glory and holiness. The seven angels having the seven last plagues, which John saw in verse 1, come out of the temple. These heavenly messengers are the executors of His fury. They are clothed in pure bright linen, in harmony with the spotless purity of Him who employs them, and the sphere where He dwells, from which they proceed on their mission. And they are girded about the breasts with golden girdles: braced up in righteousness for the execution of the judgments entrusted to them.

“And one of the four beasts 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 man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.” (Vers. 7, 8.) One of the four beasts, or living creatures, described in Revelation iv., and connected so intimately with the throne of

God, gives seven golden vials, or bowls, full of the wrath of God, to the seven angels. These vessels are of a different character from that which is conveyed by the English word "vial." The original word signifies "a bowl," that is, an open vessel, the contents of which fall with great force upon the objects upon which it is emptied. They are full of the fury of Him who liveth to the age of ages.

And the temple where God's glory dwells is filled with smoke. It denotes His glory in judgment. His glory, as we have seen, will be vindicated, and His power in judgment made manifest. All intercession on behalf of those implicated in the evil to be judged ceases, and mercy ceases to flow. No one could enter into the temple until the seven awful plagues of the fury of God had done their dire work. Chapter xvi. gives the detail of the pouring out of the contents of the bowls. It is no longer a question of the third part, as under the trumpets; the judgments under the bowls seem to be more extended.



## CHAPTER XVI.

“AND I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” The seven angels appointed to execute the fury of God upon the earth, having come out of the temple in heaven, a great voice of authority, proceeding from the same place, commands them to pour out the bowls. The earth here evidently refers to the prophetic sphere in a *general* way, whilst in the details which follow, particular portions of it are mentioned.

“And 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.” (Ver. 2.) In this verse the earth, that is, the prophetic earth, or that portion of the world which is in an outwardly ordered state, becomes the subject of divine judgment. The angel having emptied the first bowl, a terrible plague breaks out. An evil and grievous sore in the righteous government of God comes upon the men, who, renouncing their allegiance to Him, have accepted the mark of Satan’s man, the beast, and worship his image.

“And 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.” (Ver. 3.) As we have before remarked, the sea, figuratively

represents men in an agitated, unsettled and revolutionary condition. The second angel having poured out his bowl upon them, a deadly plague overtakes them. As early as Genesis ix. 4 we read of flesh with *the life thereof*, which is the blood thereof. The sea becomes blood, as *of a dead man*. All vitality is completely paralysed. Moral darkness and death reign, and the profession of life dies out.

“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, 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 another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.” (Vers. 4-7.) Rivers and fountains of waters represent the currents and movements, sources and springs of thought and opinions which influence men. Through their departure from God and the truth, men have become utterly corrupted. Who can cast his eye around and not perceive the enormous impetus given to the production and the flooding of light and corrupt literature through the misuse of the printing press? Shall man give rein to the lusts of the mind with impunity? Is there not a reckoning day? God is very patient, but grace will not forbear for ever. He has forewarned us. Men are without excuse. Here we get the execution of His holy judgment, now rapidly approaching. He is strong who executeth His word. When the third

angel pours out his bowl, the rivers and fountains of waters become blood. Such awful perversion of the privileges and blessings of Christianity and civilisation can only end in moral and physical death. It is impossible for any one acquainted with Old Testament scripture to read this passage and not be struck with the analogy between the physical plagues in Egypt (Exo. vii. 19-24) and these moral plagues which shall shortly break out in the world.

And when this judgment takes place the angel of the waters, one apparently who acts from God in relation to them, vindicates His righteousness in its execution. He says, "Thou art righteous, who art and wast, the holy one, that thou hast judged so." So it should read. The victims who suffer under this plague are verily guilty. They had offended against the holiness of the holy One, the high and lofty One, whose name is Holy, who inhabiteth eternity, having persecuted His saints. (Isa. lvii. 15.) He is the eternally existing One, He ever was the One who is infinite in holiness, doing wonders. "For," adds the angel, "they have poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; they are worthy." The rivers and fountains, that is, the moral currents and springs of popular thought and movement among the masses, are said by the angel who communicates the thought of God to become blood. All alike are held to be guilty of the blood of His saints and prophets. And what a terrible record, both in scripture and in history, there is, as every one knows who has thought upon the

subject! Therefore God is righteous in judging so, in vindicating His holiness, and in avenging the martyrdom of His people by giving the guilty to drink blood in their turn. They suffer moral death. "They are worthy." That is, they are worthy of such a judgment. Their actions proclaim their guilt.

And there is a second witness. Not only the angel of the waters, but also the altar proclaims God's righteousness in so judging. The altar in the vision is said to speak. It was a place of judgment, the witness of God's righteous dealings against sin and the sinner. "Yea," says the altar, when God's fury is poured out, "Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." Reader, are you carried away by the awful currents of human opinion in the last days? Are you going with, and imbibing the streams of infidelity, corruption and blasphemy which are so rapidly taking the place of God and His holy word? Stop ere it be too late, lest the Lord, ere long, having called His heavenly saints on high, and grace having ceased to flow, give you blood to drink!

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory." (Vers. 8, 9.) The sun, looked at figuratively, represents supreme ruling power in relation to the earth. Power is given to it to scorch men with fire, which shews that the ruling power becomes excessively oppressive. They are scorched

with great heat. It is a time of great suffering. But instead of repenting of their evil deeds and sin and rebellion against God, they blaspheme the name of Him who has authority over these awful plagues. It is the hour of the execution of His judgment, richly merited, which is poured out without mercy. The only way of escape is by true repentance towards Him. But notwithstanding that the suffering is manifestly at God's hand, they repent not to give Him glory; and instead of turning to Him in their misery, who alone could deliver them, blaspheme His holy name. Failing to give glory to God, which involves self-judgment, they suffer the scorching of the fiery sun to the bitter end.

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.” (Vers. 10, 11.) This fifth plague falls upon the seat (or throne) of the beast himself. And the kingdom of Satan's man becomes full of darkness. Men boast to-day of the diffusion of light and knowledge through the progress of education, civilisation, science, etc. One is far from undervaluing these things. No doubt, on the one hand, men reap great benefits from them. But, alas, is it not equally true on the other, that the moral effect is insubjection to God and His word, and the exaltation and glory of men? Instead of glorifying God, whose wisdom and providence bestow these boons, men, deceived by Satan and by their own hearts,

take the credit of this advancement to themselves. It is putting darkness for light. And woe, like that of Isaiah v. 20, will soon come upon all who are carried away by it. Those who refuse the Lordship of Christ and the rule of God will fall under the lordship of the beast and the rule of Satan. They will be involved in the awful moral darkness which will pervade his kingdom in the hour of God's fury. Any little light which may still have flickered will be extinguished. Having believed the lie of Satan, through strong delusion, their hearts and minds will become completely darkened, and they shall gnaw their tongues with distress and pain. They use that little but boastful and unruly member to blaspheme instead of to glorify God. It is a fire, a world of iniquity. It defileth the whole body. It setteth on fire the course of nature. And it is set on fire of hell. It is untameable, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (James iii. 1-12.) Having wrought incalculable mischief through the unruly use of their tongues, men will gnaw them with pain. But again, instead of repenting of their ungodly deeds, they will use them to blaspheme. The beast himself is blasphemous, and so are the subjects of his kingdom. Having sought to shut out the God of the earth, they blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores. Suffering both morally, mentally and physically from dire distresses and sores, through their own wicked wills, they vomit out their maledictions upon Him whose name they have utterly dishonoured, and whose glory they have trampled under foot.

“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.” (Ver. 12.) The river Euphrates was one of the four heads (or main streams) into which the river which flowed from the garden of Eden was parted. (Gen. ii. 10-14.) Later on in scripture it is given as the boundary of the land to be possessed by the children of Israel. (Josh. i. 1-4.) It was also partly the eastern boundary of the old Roman empire. Now we know that the judgments detailed in the Revelation are preparatory to the establishment of the kingdom in the hand of Christ, and mount Zion at Jerusalem will be the earthly centre of His rule. Here we get the breaking down of the eastern barrier, that the way of the kings of the east (or from the rising of the sun) might be prepared. God will thus open the way providentially for them to come up to battle ere Christ’s manifestation in power. The waters of the great river will be dried up.\* This great barrier between western and eastern powers, which has so often played an important rôle in the conflicts of nations in the past, will be effectually removed by divine power, and the oriental nations

\* There have been many surmises as to the force and meaning of this scripture. Some have thought that, looked at from the prolonged historical point of view to which we have more than once referred, it is significant of the drying up of the Turkish power. With regard to the future, whether to be taken literally or figuratively, it shews clearly the eastern barrier of the old Roman empire will be removed, preparatory to the final battle of the great day of God Almighty in the place called Armageddon.

will appear to take part in the awful conflict against Christ and His rights.

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs 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, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” (Vers. 13, 14.) In this remarkable passage the anti-trinity of evil is brought distinctly together. Satan is viewed in his draconic character, in relation to ruling power; the beast, as hitherto, who occupies his throne on the earth, savage, conscienceless and blasphemous; and the false prophet or antichrist, who now assumes a false prophetic character, in mimicry of Christ. The power of Satan being then fully established upon the earth, from each of their mouths emanates an unclean spirit, in the similitude of a frog, reminding us again of the plague of frogs in Egypt. (Exo. viii.) They are said to be the spirits of demons, working signs by Satanic power, whereby the rulers of the world are deceived. The original does not distinguish between the kings of the earth and of the whole world. It reads simply “the kings of the whole habitable world.” It is a universal judgment. The kings then in power throughout the length and breadth of the world become the prey of these demon spirits. They are drawn to the great centre of the gathering of the nations in opposition to the rights of Christ. The end of this present age is at hand. *The great day of God the*

*Almighty* is about to dawn. The most awful crisis that the world has ever known will shortly ensue. Christ and His heavenly armies are arrayed on the one hand, and all the hosts of Satan's power on earth under demon influence on the other. We shall see later on with what result. (Chaps. xvii. 14; xix. 19-21.)

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Vers. 15, 16.) The Holy Ghost had already testified that Christ would come as a thief. (1 Thess. v. 2.) Christ, too, had threatened Sardis in the same manner. (Rev. iii. 3.) Here in view of this gathering together of the kings of the world for the awful conflict, He repeats again, "Behold, I come as a thief." Suddenly, unexpectedly, these vast hosts of men will be overtaken in their wickedness and destroyed. Is there no hope for any of them? None whatever. But the same voice pronounces blessing upon him who watches and keeps his garments in view of His return. Not one such, even at that dread moment of the world's history, shall either be exposed or put to shame.

Though demoniacal power will have assembled the kings of the whole habitable world, verse 16 shews that behind these dread scenes—the workings of Satan, demons and men—there is a higher power moving. We read that *He* gathered them together. The place of assembling for the judgment is called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon, or the moun-

tain of Megiddo. Megiddo is said to signify "The place of multitudes." It has already been the scene of many conflicts, as recorded in the scripture, namely, Gideon with the Midianites; the kings of Canaan (Judg. v. 19); Saul with the Philistines; Josiah with Pharaoh; and in later times the Tartars with the Saracens. Christ will come as a thief, destroying His foes, and establishing His kingdom.

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done." (Ver. 17.) The air is the sphere of Satan's power, and he is now said to be its prince. (Eph. ii. 2.) The very moral atmosphere which men breathe has been corrupted by his presence and power. Judgment is now poured out. It is followed by a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne of God, announcing, *It is done* (or it is over or past). God will have executed His fury. It is the last of the plagues, though details of other judgments follow.

"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. (Ver. 18.) John hears and sees these terrible symbols of judgment. Jeremiah has said (chap. li. 16), "When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures." A great earthquake, unparalleled in the world's history, shatters everything

to its very foundations. Men have been again and again horrified at the awful earthquakes which have been allowed of God in His government to take place in different countries and cities; but this great earthquake which, judging by the further description, we look at morally (although it may be accompanied by great physical effects), will far eclipse them all in its solemn and widespread results.

“And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” (Vers. 19, 20.) We take the great city here to set forth the great city of the world in general. Through this judgment of God, European civilisation in the west is divided into *three* parts. “And the cities of the nations fell.” Great cities, renowned among men for their progress, enlightenment, opulence and power, come down with a terrible crash. The vanity of men’s congeries is fully exposed. And then great Babylon came into remembrance before God. Would that it were for His blessed heart’s joy! But, alas, this vast system, having its origin at Babel, lauded by men, is hateful in His holy sight. We shall see its awfully corrupt character in the next chapters, so that we will not dwell upon it here. We have already remarked that it does not refer to a literal city, but to a vast, immoral and apostate system, prefigured by the ancient city. It is the corrupt professing church, and the moment has come for

the execution of God's sentence of judgment upon her. He will give to her a full cup. Her cup of iniquity will then be full, and the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath will be poured out upon her.

“And every island fled away.” An island or land in the midst of the sea illustrates that which is fixed and stable in the midst of all that is unsettled, agitated and revolutionary. So at this moment everything that partakes of that character will disappear. There will be no refuge for safety in the midst of the waves and forces of human strife. Likewise the mountains, figures of great established powers in the earth, which tower above the masses (Dan. ii. 35), will no longer be found. They will be utterly overthrown.

“And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.” (Ver. 21.) In Job xxxviii. 22, 23 the Lord said to him, “Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?” Again in Isaiah xxviii. 2, “Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.” Here we get the breaking out of the tempest, and the discharge from the hail treasures. Like as the Lord cast down great stones of old from heaven upon the enemies of Israel (Josh. x. 11.), so

in this day a great hail of stones as of a talent weight will fall upon men. But, alas, the Spirit has to record again that the judgment of God, like His goodness, fails to bring about humbling and repentance before Him; men blaspheme God instead on account of it. It is the last of the plagues, and exceeding great.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

BABYLON having come into remembrance before God in chapter xvi. 19, we have the description of her character, her relations, and her overthrow in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters. One great feature in the ways of Satan to dishonour God and to deceive men has been to counterfeit. For centuries past he has wrought to produce a corrupt imitation of the church, which is the bride, the Lamb's wife. This great system has been characterised by usurped authority and self-exaltation, conscienceless seizure of power, deceptive religious ordinances and moral corruption. Christ as Head has been displaced, the presence of the Holy Ghost ignored, the word of God made of none effect by human tradition. The professing church has been unfaithful to Christ, and has fallen into immoral alliance with the world. Having promoted infidelity through her own worldliness and wickedness, she will eventually, in the righteous dealings of God, fall before its power. (Rev. xvii. 15-18.) Let us turn to the vision of her false glory and of her fall.

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her

fornication." (Vers. 1, 2.) As great Babylon comes into judgment in the course of the execution of the seventh plague, it is all in keeping that one of the seven angels charged with the carrying out of these terrible judgments should be employed to tell her sentence to the prophet. He invites John to him, talks to him, shews him the sentence, and who will be the instruments in carrying it out, and the manner of it. Whatever men may say and think of this great system, the angel, who knows the mind of heaven, calls it "the great harlot." She sits upon many waters. Verse 15 gives us clearly their signification. The kings of the earth are charged at once with illicit intercourse with her, and the inhabitants of (or they that dwell upon) the earth as intoxicated with her evil pleasures.

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of the abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, *Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.*" (Vers. 3-5.) In dwelling upon this scripture, we would ask our readers to compare it with chapter xxi. 9-11. One brings before us the false professing church, and the other the true church. The contrast is most striking, and clearly intentional.

John is carried away by the angel in spirit into

the wilderness to see the false, and in the Spirit to a great and high mountain to see the true. A principle of importance to the Christian comes out here. To discern the evil character of that which bears the name of Christ, but is false, that is, apostate Christendom, we must be in spirit apart from the world, in the wilderness, where all our springs and resources are in God. To discern the character of the true church we must be in the Spirit and behold it from the mountain's top, somewhat as Moses beheld the promised land from mount Pisgah. In both cases the angel says, "I will shew thee," etc. But after that John says, "I *saw* a woman," etc. (chap. xvii. 3); and "he shewed me . . . the holy Jerusalem," etc. (Chap. xxi. 10.) So also with us. We should see neither the one nor the other if it were not shewn us. But in Spirit in the wilderness we *see* the evil, whereas when in the Spirit on the mountain top we shall need to be shewn the true.

Next John sees the woman "sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. (Ver. 3.) In chapter xxi. the angel shewed him "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." (Ver. 10.) The false church is supported by the blasphemous beast to which we have already referred. The seven heads and ten horns of which we have also spoken, and of which we shall say more presently, shew clearly that it is the Roman empire. The name written on the woman's forehead is "Babylon the great," etc. Hence we get the false church presented under the double figure of a

woman and of a city. Likewise the true. The angel calls her "the bride, the Lamb's wife," and shews John "the holy city, Jerusalem." (Chap. xxi. 9, 10.) Moreover, the false is called "the great," whereas the true is called "the holy." The word "great" is not in the original in chapter xxi. 10. The false is visibly carried by the beast, that is, external religion rules over the nations. She is also supported by evil and infidel and blasphemous political power. It embraces the evil union of the false church and state. The true is invisibly supported. Heavenly in her origin, divine in her source, she is sustained by the invisible and almighty power of God. The false is called, "Mystery, Babylon the great." The true is "the mystery," Jerusalem the holy. (Eph. iii; Rev. xxi. 9-11.) The false, through illicit intercourse with the kings of the world, is the "mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." The true is the pure chaste virgin, the bride that becomes the Lamb's wife. The false being not only herself a harlot, but the mother of others, shews that one must get a broad view of her character in order to arrive at God's thought of what the figure embraces. Babylon in her full-blown character embraces apostate Christendom. The spiritual mind will not fail to perceive at work to-day the elements which characterise Babylon, and will respond to the exhortation to come out of her, lest one should become partaker of her plagues. In the midst of the evil, there are many who belong to the true church, who sigh and cry on account of these things. God knows every

one. But, alas, that any should sanction in any way the awful religious corruption of Christendom! Babylon, confusion the great, is also the mother of the abominations (or idolatries) of the earth. Strange anomaly, extraordinary blindness, that Christendom should so look down upon the idolatry of heathendom and yet fill her so-called churches and adorn her ecclesiastical buildings with images and pictures and worship before them. Even the followers of the false prophet Mohammed put Christendom to shame in this.

Further, "the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls" (ver. 4), whereas the light (or shining) of the bride was like *a most precious stone* (so), as a *crystal-like* jasper stone. (Chap. xxi. 11.) The false is arrayed in imperial and kingly raiment and glory, and decked with all that is most valuable in the eyes of men; the true shines with the reflection of the glory of Christ. Who but He could be called "*a most precious stone*"? And the shining of the city is like it, as a crystal-like jasper stone.

Again, the false woman has *a golden cup* in her hand full of abominations, whereas the true has *the glory of God*.

The awful brand which this false system bears upon her forehead is manifest before all. It is called "mystery," or secret. But it is only those whose hearts are deceived, and whose minds are blinded by the god of this world, who are duped by it. Those who are taught by the Holy Ghost can read it plainly enough. To them it is a secret told.

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration [or wonderment].” (Ver. 6.) God has only established two religious systems upon the earth (if we may so call them) in relation to men, namely, Judaism and Christianity. Both of them have become utterly corrupted through the power of Satan and the will of man. Both are charged with having shed the blood of God’s own people. In Matthew xxiii. 34–39 Jerusalem is declared to be guilty of all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from Abel downwards to the time of Christ, and she filled her cup in crucifying Him. Here the professing church, Babylon the great, is seen as the woman drunken with the blood of God’s saints and the martyrs of Jesus. No wonder that John wondered with great wonderment as he beheld this marvellous vision.

“And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on 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 yet is.” (Vers. 7, 8.) We have already spoken somewhat both of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, remarking that the Christian, taught by the Spirit, can understand. In this seventh verse the angel asks John,

the christian prophet, the cause of his wonderment, and tells him further details of the meaning of the vision. He speaks first of the beast. It was, is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit or abyss, and it shall go into perdition. In reading the whole description, and comparing it with other passages in the Revelation and in Daniel, there is the clearest proof, as we have more than once already remarked, that it refers to the Roman empire. It "was," lasting several centuries before and after Christ; it "is not," for it succumbed before the invasions of the barbarian world; it "*shall* [or is about to] *ascend* out of the abyss" sets forth its awful origin at its resuscitation in the near future (which, as we shall see, will be in a ten-kingdom form, under the headship of him who is also called "the beast"); and "*go into perdition*" the sure and abiding judgment of God finally coming upon it. "Ascending out of the abyss" is characteristic of it during the last half week. Dwellers upon the earth again appear, filled also with wonder as they behold this terrible power, which had once fallen, but shall then become Satan's throne on the earth, being resuscitated by his energy and power. They are men whose names are not written in the book of life *from* the foundation of the world. Those whose names are written will witness, and either suffer death for their testimony, or be preserved through the hour of trial. Saints of this present interval are chosen in Christ for heaven by glory from *before* the foundation of the world. (Eph. i. 4.)

"And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The

seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there 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 space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And 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." (Vers. 9-12.) "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) The mind which hath wisdom must receive it from God who is its source. In speaking of this same beast in chapter xiii. we referred to some of these details in order to make it clear to readers not already somewhat acquainted with this subject. The seven heads represent seven mountains or hills. Rome is known world-wide as the city of seven hills. It is the seat of the woman, or the false professing church. "And [there] are seven kings." The seven heads, as we saw, have a double signification. They also represent seven kings or ruling powers. "Five are fallen." When John wrote, the Roman empire had been under five successive forms of government—kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs and military tribunes. "One is." It was the time of the imperial rule of the Cæsars. The other, the seventh, is not yet come. The writer shares the thought of many that this is a reference to the first Napoleon, who rose into power and conquered most of the territory comprised in the old Roman earth. "When he cometh, he must continue a short

space." From the Isle of Corsica, in the midst of the sea, he rose from obscurity to imperial power, continued a short space, and disappeared from the stage of this world, to spend the short remainder of his life in another island of the sea. "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven." We must bear in mind here what we have remarked on chapter xiii., that the term "beast" is applied both to the empire and to its head. The head of the empire, the beast, is an eighth, in that he comes after the seven ruling powers we have just mentioned. He is also said to be of the seven, in that he also will be imperial. He goes into perdition. Chapter xix. 20 shews that he will be cast alive into the lake of fire. The ten horns on the beast are said to be ten kings. The empire will take this form towards the close of its history. They had received no kingdom as yet when John wrote. Many kingdoms have been formed since within the sphere then occupied by the Roman power. The boundaries of the old Roman empire varied according to the success of the Roman legions. It remains to be seen what the exact boundaries will be when the empire is resuscitated in the ten-kingdom form at that day. The kings receive power or authority one hour, or at the same time with the beast.

"These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." (Ver. 13.) Men speak constantly, even now, of the European concert, and there are repeated efforts on the part of the great powers to act together,\* as crisis

\* It is clear, however, from the prophetic Word, that not all

upon crisis occurs, in order to avoid the awful arbitrage of the sword, and all the terrible consequences of international strife. Conscious of the destructive power of modern weapons, and of the deplorable results of war for all parties involved, the tendency of these powers is to act together, thus unconsciously paving the way for the character of things portrayed in relation to the empire of ten kingdoms. And as no power can be long maintained without a head, this will open the way for the rise, reception and exaltation of the beast as false king of kings and lord of lords! The ten kings will have one mind, doubtless brought about by Satanic power, and thus combine to give their power and authority to the beast.\* Hence he will wield a power, through Satan on the one hand, and through the ten kings on the other, unparalleled in the history of the world.

“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.” (Ver. 14.) Think of the impiety and deep-dyed wickedness of men, kings and their peoples rising up to make war against the holy and humble Lamb of God, the One who stooped from the height supreme of glory, to all the awful depths of Calvary’s woe to give Himself a ransom for all! Truly, indeed, men love

the powers which now form this concert will be found among the ten kings of that day.

\* On the other hand, God, who is over all and behind all the scenes of this world, puts it in their hearts to fulfil His will, etc. (See chap. xvii. 17.)

darkness more than light, and hate the light. (John iii. 19, 20.) They soon have to learn their folly. Overcome at once, mighty power succumbing before Almighty, it is manifest that they have followed an impostor, and that Christ, and He only, is King of kings and Lord of lords. (Chap. xix. 16, 19-21.) And the Lamb, the great King, is not alone. He is surrounded with His redeemed ones. Three things characterise this privileged and richly-blessed company. They are called and chosen and faithful. Called with a heavenly calling, chosen in Christ, viewed as faithful, having shared His sufferings and rejection at the hands of men, and having stood for God, they share the glory of His triumph in that day, when He shall tread His foes beneath His feet.

“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” (Ver. 15.) This passage is a very distinct one amongst others as a key to the right interpretation of symbols used in the Revelation. We are told plainly what the waters are. They represent the peoples of the world, multitudes of men, nations of the earth, and varied tongues, where the evil woman has found her seat. Both scripture and history demonstrate unquestionably that it refers generally to vast populations on the earth.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon [and, New Trans.] the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.” (Ver. 16.) The ten horns and the beast, that is

the ten kings, as already explained, having lapsed into infidelity, through the blinding power of Satan, and the deceitfulness of their own hearts and of sin, become open enemies of the false church. Hatred fills their hearts against this great, immoral corruptress. They use their power to make her utterly desolate. They strip her of her purple and scarlet and gaudy jewellery. They consume her flesh, and they burn her with fire. Though, looked at broadly, this must be taken figuratively, it is highly probable that similar scenes will be enacted as those which, on a smaller scale, accompanied the French revolution, such as open violence against ecclesiastical authority and influence, the despoiling of church wealth, the destruction and burning of ecclesiastical buildings. Also the endeavour to utterly stamp out all pretension to religion, and to support infidel and blasphemous authority and influence in its place.

“For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.” (Rev. 17.) Though kings and their subjects are the active agents in this overwhelming destruction of the harlot, they little know that they are carrying out the will of God in the judgment of that grossly wicked system. A little later they themselves also, in the midst of their infidelity and blasphemy, will come under His judgment. (Rev. xix. 21.) God, operating with invisible power, puts it into the hearts of these kings to execute *His will*, to confederate together, and, without any religious restraint, to give their kingdom to the blasphemous

beast at their head. But it is only for a little while. Satan's millennium (if we may so call it) is very short-lived. False religion, infidelity, Satanic rule will all come down with a mighty crash before the almighty will of the living God. It is thus far and no farther. Great as these kings and their power may be, and however great the power of their head, the beast, all are but as puppets in the hand of the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity. They can only act "until the words of God shall be fulfilled." They are many, but not one shall fall to the ground. What He hath spoken, He is able also to perform. He is strong that executeth His word. (Joel ii. 11.)

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." (Ver. 18.) Here again, nothing can be plainer than the explanation as to who the woman is. She is that great reigning city to which the kings of the earth have been subject. Rome's constant effort ever since she enchained the minds of men with her sorceries, has been not only to exercise ecclesiastical, but also political power over the kings of Christendom. By means of bulls, banns, interdicts and other Satanic weapons, many mighty monarchs have been compelled to bite the dust and to obey the edicts of the Vatican. For a long period her power was supreme. The false vicar of Christ and his court, arrayed in purple and scarlet and with precious stones, usurped and long maintained their authority, and the so-called church ruled instead of Christ the true Head. But as light from the Reformation onwards has dawned,

and the word of God has gradually regained its authority and supremacy more or less in the hearts of the Lord's people, and education and civilisation have exposed superstition, the papal power has waned. Protestantism as such has proved itself to be a feeble bulwark, masses within its pale having never escaped from, or having lapsed back more or less under papal influences. A sorry state of things is the result. The great city has lost nearly all its political, and a great deal of its ecclesiastical power; and infidelity and socialism have lifted up their head. Masses have fallen away from even the external forms of corrupted Christianity, and whilst Romanism holds her own in some parts, and makes persistent and secret efforts to recover her lost ground in others (here and there with some measure of success), the great rising tide of *infidelity* will, at the rapidly approaching end of the age, overwhelm the great city, led on by Satan to its utter destruction. Blessed be God, He has to-day, those who seek to maintain His glory, and to stand apart from the awful evil perpetrated under the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. And He will have other witnesses for His glory, in the day of the coming crisis.\*

\* The woman is supported by the beast which comes out in a blasphemous character. At the close, with the aid of the ten kings, the Babylonish system will be destroyed, and they will support his infidel power till the words of God are fulfilled and his power is overthrown by Christ.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

“AND after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.” (Ver. 1.) In this remarkable chapter we have a further description of Babylon the great, viewed as a city, and of her overthrow. In chapter xvii. we see the human agents active in her destruction. In chapter xviii. it is looked at more from the divine side, and it speaks of the angel instrumentality employed in her judgment. (Vers. 20, 21.) The “after these things” of verse 1 does not denote that the contents of this chapter follow chapter xvii. chronologically, but the order in which John saw that which was set forth in the vision. He sees another heavenly messenger who has great power, and the earth, the sphere of the judgment about to be executed, was “lightened with his glory.”

“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, 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. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.” (Vers. 2, 3.) The angel with great authority cries with a strong voice. The announcement of the fall of

great Babylon is loud, that many may hear. That which follows shews that it is not a question of the execution of her judgments of which the angel speaks. That is found at the close of the chapter. It is the declaration of her great moral fall, and consequent condition, followed by an exhortation to the Lord's people to come out of her, previous to her judgment, which comes in verses 8 and 21. The voice of the angel cries, "Babylon the great *has* fallen, *has* fallen." So terrible had been the moral fall of the false church that it is recorded twice. The *true* church is the habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22), the blessed sphere of liberty of Him who came upon Christ in the form of a dove (Matt. iii. 16), the *Holy* Spirit of God. But, alas, the profession of Christianity in Babylon had fallen to the lowest depths of confusion and corruption. False to Christ, and to herself, the so-called church, the mother of harlots and idolatries, had become the habitation of Satan's emissaries, the demons, the hold, or prison, of every unclean spirit, and of every unclean and hated bird. How many a soul has groaned in the darkness of human systems, sighing for light and life and liberty, but bound with the strong chains of tradition and custom, with no way of escape! How many have religiously followed the ordinances and ritual of external religion, strangers to the love of God, the Saviour in glory, and the peace and joy flowing from the knowledge of Himself through His finished work! How many have been deceived by this masterpiece of Satan! Some maintain that it is the true church and that outside

of it is no salvation, whilst others are satisfied with outwardly purifying themselves from the grossest superstitions and errors, and yet, with a name to live, are spiritually dead.

All nations have been more or less intoxicated with the passing joy of intercourse with this wicked harlot. But it is a cup of joy which brings down the fury of God. Kings too of the earth have sought to their hurt the pleasure of her evil embrace. Merchants of the earth have become enriched through the thriving trade which her love of luxury has fostered.

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.” (Vers. 4, 5.) Another voice from heaven reaches the ear of John. It utters words of deepest moment for all God’s people. No doubt it will apply in fullest force just before the execution of the judgment of God upon her. *But the principle surely applies at the present moment.* “Come out of her, my people,” cries this heavenly voice. It is uttered, not by an angel, but by a voice from heaven, direct to God’s people on earth. “Come out of her.” Christian reader, have you obeyed? Have you come outside the vast system of the false and evil principles, traditions and corruptions comprising that which God calls “Babylon the great”? Her sins have been heaped on one another up to the heaven. *So it reads in the original.* It is a remarkable expression. Babylon’s sins are piled

up, so to speak, from earth to heaven. And God has remembered her unrighteousnesses. Nothing is hidden from His eyes. Nothing escapes His knowledge. Nothing is forgotten by Him. He remembers all. He would have His people separate from all that He is about to judge. Saints are called upon to refuse sin and unrighteousness. Her sins bring plagues. God calls upon us to refuse fellowship with her sins, that we may not receive of her plagues. Shall Christians follow the world and have fellowship with the works of Satan? Shall the bride of Christ, unsullied and pure, contaminate herself by friendship or fellowship with Satan's harlot? My people! Are you one? *Come out of her.* God means what He says, and says what He means. Dare you disobey? Do you know the love of Christ? Does your heart respond to His love? How then can you tarry another moment in the company of the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth?

“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. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” (Vers. 6, 7.) Our English translation seems to address this to the people of God, as though they were to reward her and double to her for her evil treatment. But the true force of the passage is rather, “Recompense her even as she has recompensed; and double to her double, according to her works. In the cup

which she has mixed, mix to her double." Her awful recompense for all her oppression and persecution of God's people will surely be meted out to her by Him. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord; "I will repay." (Rom. xii. 19.) God knows Babylon's works. He is an all-discriminating and just Judge. What Babylon has sown Babylon will surely reap. The cup that she has mixed! And, oh, the misery, the untold misery that God's true people and others also have suffered at her hands. A bitter cup it has been indeed! And God will mix hers to her double. "Be ye sure of this, your sin will find you out"! (Num. xxxii. 23.) And so will Babylon's sin find her out.

"How much she hath glorified herself, and lived luxuriously." Babylon has been guilty of these two grave sins before God. She has sought her own glory instead of the glory of God, and has lived luxuriously instead of simply and becomingly in the hour of the absence of Christ. And the word of God says, "*So much* as she has glorified *herself* and lived luxuriously, *so much* torment and grief give to *her*. Because she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and I am not a widow; and I shall in no wise see grief"! God looketh upon the heart, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. (Jer. xvii. 9.) Its thoughts are not as the thoughts of God. Where is the lament for the absence of Christ? Where is the mourning for His death at the world's hand? Where is the sense of unfitness for the presence of Him who is infinitely holy? All these things are utterly lack-

ing. Babylon is full of self-satisfaction and self-conceit. The *true* church realises her widowhood now, suffers during Christ's absence, and looks to reign with Him at His return. But the false church says in her heart, "I sit a queen," and reigns before the time. "I am no widow." She refuses to mourn for Christ, and says, "I shall in no wise see grief." She is blind to the awful and grievous retribution of God.

"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." (Ver. 8.) Babylon's judgment will be swift and sure. Her plagues on account of her grievous sins shall come in one day. They are threefold. Death, mourning and famine shall prevail on all hands. Where will her glory and luxury be then? "She will be utterly burned with fire." God's searching judgment shall come upon her suddenly, and she shall be utterly destroyed. The judge is the Lord God Himself. His judgment is just, and He is strong who executeth it.

Next we get the grievous lament of three classes who suffer by Babylon's fall. The kings of the earth, the merchants of the earth, and the traffickers on the sea bewail her. Each class in turn cries, "Alas, alas [or woe, woe] that great city!" Let us pursue the detail.

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar

off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come." (Vers. 9, 10.) The kings of the earth who have had unholy intercourse with this wicked system and shared in her luxuries, now weep and wail, not on account of their sins, but over Babylon, as they see the smoke of her judgment, at the moment when God shall vindicate His holiness, and glorify Himself over her who failed to glorify Him. The kings stand afar off. Glad of Babylon's support, and to help support her in the day of her false glory, they would gladly now escape the consequences of her fall. They fear her torment and say, "Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour thy judgment is come." Little had they dreamt that that huge and widespread system, apparently so strong, would come down with so great a crash! Satan's religious fortress seemed impregnable, but mighty as is his power, the strong man had met with One already proved to be stronger than he! The almighty power of Almighty God will surely crush the mighty power of His foe at the close. The kings themselves perceive and own that it is Babylon's *judgment*.

"And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass,

and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves [or bodies], and souls of men." (Vers. 11-13.) Next the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her. Why? Because their hopes in regard to eternity are dashed to the ground? Oh, no! There is something far more important apparently in their eyes. Temporal gain to them is of far more value than eternal. "For no man buyeth their merchandise any more." European civilisation in her mixed commercial and religious aspect, seen in the crowds of wares and luxuries filling her warehouses, shops and homes, had come to grief. God at last had stopped the commerce of men who had forgotten Him, and had lived only to enrich themselves, only too often mixed with trickery and roguery at their neighbours' expense. Trade and wealth give place to bankruptcy, ruin, misery, famine. Strong is He who judgeth her. The next two verses give details of the commodities in which the merchants deal for their own enrichment. One may divide them under the following heads: jewellery, dress, costly furniture, perfumery, drink, food, equipage, and lastly, bodies and souls of men. Babylon had glorified herself and lived luxuriously in these things. The kings had shared them. The merchants were enriched by them. Mark that jewellery heads the list, and men's souls close it. Who can picture the suffering of many, both in body and soul, during hundreds of years for the promotion of this vast system? Slavery, and in

modern 'times also, the sweating system (as men call it), with underpay, have had their part therein. How many bodies have been worn out and souls lost through the exigencies of business, and the restless anxiety to become rich!

Another very interesting and instructive point also comes out here. In the description of the harlot's clothing (chap. xvii. 4) there is no mention of fine linen. Now fine linen, with which the bride, the Lamb's wife, will be adorned at the time of the espousals, is said to be "the righteousnesses of the saints." (Rev. xix. 8.) Of this the woman 'has none. She is clothed<sup>d</sup> with human glory which pleases the flesh (but they that are in the flesh cannot please God). But practical righteousness is wanting. When it comes to Babylon's trade, fine linen is mentioned. She has known well how to enrich herself at the expense of the practical righteousness of the true children of God. We apply it morally. It is a lesson of deep significance. Thousands for conscience' sake have suffered impoverishment through her unrighteous exactions. Moreover, when the merchants bewail the fall of the city in verse 16, they mention "fine linen" first in regard to her clothing. The natural man, engrossed with the affairs of this life, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. His imagination runs riot, and with outward respect for the system so widely accredited among men, and attracted by the gorgeous colours of her adornment, he concludes that fine linen, practical righteousness, among other things is there. None but true saints made God's righteousness in Christ, can

possibly practice righteousness acceptable to God.

“And 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.” (Ver. 14.) What a terrible awakening for the great commercial world! The (ripe) fruits (which is the force of the passage), the lust of the soul, just when they are apparently at their best, have departed. They perish, no more to be enjoyed. All that is dainty and goodly, fair and splendid, departed. Think of the bitter disappointment! Instead of the lust of the soul being satisfied with all that is naturally desirable in this vast system in which the commercial world moves, nothing but an empty void is left. Hence, like the kings, the merchants stand afar off. The source of their wealth is being dried up through the judgment of God, and their hearts are filled with fear, on account of her torment, and they weep and wail, saying, “Alas, alas [or woe, woe] 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 has been made desolate.” (Vers. 15, 16.) Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Babylon’s greatness and glory filled the merchants’ minds, and they mourn her desolation and the loss of *the great riches* which were found in her.

“And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke

of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on 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! for in one hour is she made desolate." (Vers. 17-19.) Lastly, all classes connected with the sea and sea-borne trade in ships come into view. Shipmasters (or steersmen), every one who sailed to any place, sailors, and all who exercise their calling on the sea, like unto the kings and merchants, stand afar off. And gazing upon the smoke of her burning, they say, "What city is like to *the* great city?" Journeying to many lands, they would see many of the great cities of the earth, but none compares in their eyes with Babylon the great, the source of all their profit and wealth. Their sorrow and anguish are shewn by their casting dust upon their heads, and by their weeping and grieving. "Woe, woe," they cry, "*the great city*, in which all that had ships in the sea were enriched through *her costliness!* for in one hour she has been made desolate." The fall from her greatness and the loss of her wealth through the costliness of her maintenance are the cause, as in the case of the kings and the merchants, of their bitter lament.

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." (Ver. 20.) God had not forgotten the sorrows of His people. It is the day of His vengeance. (Isa. xxxiv. 8.) But their sorrow is now to be turned into joy. Heaven is called upon to rejoice at the fall of pretentious Babylon, in

which those who had been called on high had suffered. Saints, apostles, and prophets had suffered centuries long at the hands of the great city of confusion, which godless men had built up for their own glory without God. But now the tables are completely turned. God's saints are seen glorified in heaven, whilst vengeance on His and their enemies is falling on the earth. Rejoice over her, heaven, ye saints, etc., rejoice, "For God has judged your judgment upon her." (New Trans.)

"And a mighty angel 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, and shall be found no more at all." (Ver. 21.) At the conclusion of his prophecy concerning the literal city of Babylon of old (chap. li. 63, 64), Jeremiah said to the quiet prince Seraiah (ver. 59), "It shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt *bind a stone* to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and *shall not rise* from the evil that I will bring upon her." This is conclusive that the literal city shall not rise again as some have erroneously thought. Here the strong angel takes up also a stone, as a great millstone, and casts it into *the sea*. It is figurative, as he says, of the violence with which the great moral Babylon is overthrown, the sea probably setting forth a vast mass of men in a state of revolutionary agitation. Probably great human violence will take place in connection with her overthrow, the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear. (Luke xxi.

25, 26.) And she also shall never rise again. She 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: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” (Vers. 22, 23.) This detailed announcement of the complete cessation of all these things in the Babylonish sphere shews how hateful their abuse, in the self-glorification and luxurious course of this evil system, has been in God’s sight. The voice of music shall be hushed for ever. No artificer of any art shall remain. The grinding millstone shall cease to be heard. No light of lamp shall shine. The voice of the betrothed shall no more fall on the ear. No more at all, no more at all, is the solemn word of the Spirit of God in relation to all the chief elements which ministered to this corrupt system which God will so sternly judge. For the merchants of Babylon were men that left their mark on her history; they were the great ones of the earth. And all nations have been deceived by her devilish sorcery.

“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” (Ver. 24.) Shall not God make inquisition for the blood of His saints? Has He not said

that the blood is the life; and is not man's life sacred? With long patience He has foreborne. But His solemn day of reckoning must come. As He casts His all-searching gaze upon Babylon, and reads her history from the commencement to the close, including all the horrors of man's inquisition, what is His verdict? His word repeats again that in her was found the blood of His prophets, the blood of His saints, and the blood of all that were slain on the earth. (Jer. li. 49.) A terrible indictment! Babylon is very guilty. Great and lasting will be her fall.



## CHAPTER XIX.

“AND after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous 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, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.” (Vers. 1-3.) The judgment of God had overtaken the evil woman, and heaven is jubilant. A multitude on high express their joy as one, with loud voice. Hallelujah, glory be to God, reverberates far and wide through the heavenly courts. They rejoice in three things, “the salvation, and the glory, and the power of our God.” The word “honour” is not in the Greek. God had wrought salvation for His own, maintained His glory notwithstanding the self-glorification of Babylon, and displayed the power of His might in her complete overthrow. True and righteous are His judgments. He had caused condign judgment to fall upon the harlot-corruptress. Many of His faithful bondmen had suffered at her hand. But God had avenged their blood. A second time the vast multitude cries, Hallelujah. And the smoke of her fiery judgment ascends to the ages of ages. Long had God borne with her false glory, her corruptions, and the bitter persecutions of His people, but she had met with her reward at last, and her punishment endureth for ever.

“And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great.” (Vers. 4, 5.) The whole of the heavenly saints as one fall down and worship God who sat on the throne, and who had vindicated before the whole universe the glory of His great name. They add their Amen to the just judgment of God, and their lips cause the heavens to resound again with their Hallelujah. It is followed by a voice from the throne, which appears to be that of Christ, who associates saints with Himself, for it says, “*Praise our God.*” The heavenly saints had shewn their joy in the downfall of the harlot by worshipping God, but now this voice calls upon others, saying, “Praise our God, all ye his bondmen, *and ye that fear him, small and great.*” His servants then on earth are called upon to join in His praise, and all that fear Him (and the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom), whoever they may be, whether small or great.

“And 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. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” (Vers. 6, 7.) Again the prophet hears a vast sound which is like that which proceeds from the voice of a great multitude, or as the fall of many waters of a great river,

or as that of mighty thunderings reverberating in the heavens. Once more Hallelujah bursts forth, as they rejoice in the establishment of the coming kingdom. Satan's powers one after another are falling before the power of God. The final blow is about to be given. "Hallelujah," cries this vast host, "for the Lord our God the Almighty has taken to himself kingly power. Let us rejoice and exult," they cry, "and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come." Joy fills the hearts of this mighty multitude, and they are exuberant with praise, as they think of the glory of the kingdom, and of the crowning day of the espousals of the Lamb. He who had suffered and died on earth for the glory of God, and for the salvation of His people, was now taking His power manifestly, and entering into His blessed heart's long awaited joy. In that glorious day, the Lamb, the spotless and unblemished One, who, fore-ordained of God, suffered, died and bled upon Calvary, shall see of the travail of His soul, and be fully satisfied. "And his wife hath made herself ready." In verse 4 the elders (the heavenly saints) are mentioned for the last time. The hour of the marriage of the Lamb being come, His wife (the church, composed of the saints from Pentecost onward to their translation to glory (1 Thess. iv. 15-18)) takes her distinctive place. Everything in relation to her that needed to be ordered in view of that wondrous consummation of joy being completed, the wife is viewed as having made herself ready. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the

fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Ver. 8.) This is a lovely instance of God's great grace. A special grant is made to the wife of the Lamb on this glorious occasion. Her bridal robe is composed of fine linen, bright and pure. It is not the righteousness of God. Every saint becomes that through grace in Christ, the risen One, who has been made sin for us. (2 Cor. v. 21.) But fine linen sets forth figuratively the righteousnesses of the saints. All the practical righteousnesses of His saints, wrought here in the power of the Holy Ghost, are (so to speak) like threads in that beautiful garment, which, then completed, shall adorn the wife of the Lamb on the joyous day of the recognition of those heavenly espousals.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Vers. 9, 10.) The blessing of the bride, the Lamb's wife, is incomparable; she is one with Christ for eternity. But others are called to participate in the marriage supper, and are pronounced blessed. It has been thought by many that this privileged company comprises the saints of the Old Testament. "And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." We cannot speak certainly, but think it most probable that the speaker here is the same angel as in chapter xvii. 1, who

shews him the whole vision. (Compare also chap. xxii. 8, 9.) It was blessed for John, and it is blessed for us to know that these marvellous sayings are true. They are the sayings of Him who cannot lie, and who is able to, and will, most surely keep His word. John, overwhelmed with the greatness both of the message and of the one who communicates it, fell at his feet to worship him. But he is not an object of worship, and he forbids him, saying, "See thou do it not. I am thy fellow-bondman, and the fellow-bondman of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus." And he concludes by saying that this testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of God's prophetic utterance. There is a literal fulfilment of the word of prophecy. But *the spirit* of this wonderful communication in relation of God's ways is the testimony of *Jesus* Himself.

From verse 11 onwards we enter upon fresh unfoldings of God's ways. To help our readers to a better spiritual apprehension of this part of the Revelation of Jesus Christ and to more clearly discern the sequence of events, we would call attention here to the repeated use by the prophet of the words, "And I saw." They are mentioned some seven or eight times. Each time they are employed, a fresh vision meets his view. And they all follow, and will be fulfilled, consecutively. Commencing at chapter xix. 11, they close at chapter xxi. 8. (From chapter xxi. 9 onwards we go back; it begins a description of the glory of the true church in contrast to that of the false in chapter xvii. 1.) The visions are as follows: the

manifestation of the true King of kings (chap. xix. 11); the invitation to the great supper of God (vers. 17, 18); the opposition of the beast (ver. 19); the binding of Satan (chap. xx. 1); the millennial thrones (ver. 4); the great white throne and the judgment of the dead (vers. 11-15); the new heaven and new earth (chap. xxi. 1); the church in the glory of the age of ages. (Ver. 2.) Let us turn to the detail.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.” (Vers. 11-13.) It has often been said that this sets forth the Lord coming out of heaven. But it is rather the heaven opened, and the prophet sees Him ready to come out. As always, when the heaven is opened, the central Object seen is Christ. Connecting with it verses 14-16, He is seen at the head of the heavenly armies, previous to the conflict. Verse 19 gives the gathering together of the opposing armies of Satan. Verses 20, 21 give their overthrow.

First John sees a white horse, and One sitting upon it. He is called Faithful and True. In verse 12 He has a name written which no man knew but He Himself. In verse 13 His name is called “The Word of God.” In verse 16, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” This fourfold

designation of Christ, looked at in a general way, is in striking keeping with His presentation in the four gospels. In Mark, He is the servant Prophet, the faithful and true Witness. In Luke, He is the Son of man, whose Person is inscrutable. In John, He is the Word become flesh. In Matthew, He is the true King. Rejected in every way by Israel and the world, the day is rapidly approaching when He will come forth in judgment upon His enemies. Ere He appears, the Spirit reveals His fourfold character. Being seated on a white horse would shew that, whilst for the glory of God He must tread all His foes beneath His feet, it is peace that He has in view, and which He will surely establish upon the earth. Faithful and true, He both judges and makes war *in righteousness*. He loves righteousness and hates lawlessness (Heb. i. 9), and righteousness will characterise all His ways both in establishing and in the exercise of His rule, whether in the judgment of His enemies or in conflict against the opposing military power. "His eyes are a flame of fire," which shews the intense and all-searching penetration of His gaze. He whose eyes run to and fro in the earth will discern all, and He will know how to discriminate between the evil and the good. "Upon his head many diadems." The diadems are His by right. One blow will bring down the power of His foes. Many kings shall be overthrown. He, whose right it is, and whom God delights to honour, will come forth in warrior power and overturn Satan's throne and take possession of His own. All kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations serve Him.

(Psa. lxxii. 11.) He has "a name written which no one knows but himself." This blessed One, in the inscrutable glory of His person, bears a written name, whose glory and wondrous character no creature can penetrate. He alone knows it, in whom all wisdom dwells. "And he is clothed with a garment dipped in blood." Many have fallen into the grievous mistake of thinking that this refers to His own precious blood. It is symbolical of the blood of His enemies, which He was about to shed. When Jesus was about to be crucified, men stripped Him of His raiment, parted His garments among them, and cast lots for His vesture. (Matt. xxvii. 35.) Later His precious blood was shed upon the cross. But here He is *clad* with a *garment dipped* in blood. We find a similar figure in Isaiah lxiii. 1-3, where He comes from Edom in *dyed garments* . . . red in His apparel, His garments like Him that treadeth in the winefat. In treading down His foes, their blood shall be sprinkled upon His garments, and all His raiment be stained. "And his name is called The Word of God." As already remarked, it is written of Him that "the Word became flesh." (John i. 14.) He was the expression of the mind and heart of God. He was God manifest in flesh. (1 Tim. iii. 16.) But the light of His holy presence exposed man. Had there been nought but grace in Him, many might have welcomed His advent. But He was full of grace *and truth*. The mass could not bear the truth, and would not have it. Wherefore Jesus said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John xii.

48.) Here we have arrived at the introduction of that day. And, as He is about to come forth in judgment the Holy Ghost designates Him as "The Word of God."

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." (Ver. 14.) With Christ at their head, the heavenly armies follow. These armies, we judge, comprise the sum of the heavenly saints both of the New and of the Old Testament. In other scriptures the holy angels also follow in His train. (Matt. xxv. 31.) But here the clothing of the armies shews clearly that they are saints. We have seen that fine linen is figurative of the righteousnesses of the saints, and they are clad therewith—white, pure, fine linen. It shews us, as said, the heavenly armies ready, following Christ.

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Vers. 15, 16.) From the mouth of Him who is called "The Word of God" goeth a sharp sword. In Hebrews iv. 12 we read that the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. He is coming in power. There is no withstanding the deadly thrust of His living word in judgment. The nations will be smitten by it. It is the commencement of the judgment of the quick or living nations, which He is about to execute. As saith the prophet Zephaniah (chap. iii. 8), "for my

determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." "And he shall rule [or shepherd] them with a rod of iron." He is not only the Shepherd of Israel, but also of the nations. Having judged His foes, He will take His throne, wear the crown, and shepherd the *spared* nations. It will be with a rod of iron. (Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5.) Justice and judgment will be the habitation of His throne. All evil will be suppressed. His authority and power will be universal. The government will be upon His shoulder. When His judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness. (Isa. xxvi. 9.) He will tread "the wine-press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." This corresponds with chapter xiv. 17-20. And having thus trodden all His foes beneath His feet, gathering out of His kingdom all that do iniquity (Matt. xiii. 41), He will take to Himself His great power and reign. "Upon his garment, and upon his thigh, a name is written, *King of kings, and Lord of lords.*" Both officially and by right and power He is universal King. Satan's false king of kings will fall before Him. All the kings and lords of the earth shall fall down before Him whose right it is. There shall be one King over all the earth, one Lord, and His name one. (Zech. xiv. 9.)

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and 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." (Vers. 17, 18.) Having beheld the vision of the Lord and of His heavenly hosts in the opened heaven, before the final stroke of judgment on the military power of the beast with His own hand, John next sees an angel calling to the fowls of heaven to assemble to feast on the carcasses of those about to be slain. The angel is seen standing in the sun. He appears to be representative of Him who is the Sun of righteousness, and who is about to exercise His supreme and glorious power. With loud voice the angel summons the birds of prey. They are called to the great supper of God (for so it should be rendered). Seven classes are included in the awful overthrow, whose flesh will be preyed upon: Kings, chiliarchs, strong men, horses, their riders, the free and bond, and the small and great. None escape.

"And 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." (Ver. 19.) This is, so to speak, the array for war of Satan's human forces. The beast, the head of the revived Roman empire, the great emperor of the West, the false king of kings and lord of lords, with the kings of the earth, to whom we have already more than once alluded, surrounded with their vast armies, are gathered

together swayed by Satanic power (infidel and blasphemous). They are arrayed, bold and defiant, to dispute the rights of God's King, and those who follow Him. This is the final development of the great standing armies of western and southern Europe. Prepared professedly for defence, for the hindrance of war, and for the maintenance of the balance of power, Satan goads on the rulers of the world, and these vast assemblages of armed men, until they stand up in their folly against the true Prince of princes, and are broken without hand. Formed as the united states of western Europe, under the powerful rule of Satan's man, nothing is restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. (Gen. xi. 6.) But *mighty* as is the power of the beast and the combined kings, they are about to meet *almighty* power, which brings about their sudden and irretrievable overthrow in judgment.

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” (Vers. 20, 21.) “The beast was taken.” He thought to make war. But little does he realise the power of the force arrayed against him. In a moment he is taken alive. He is powerless against the Man of God's purpose, the Faithful and True, who judges and makes war in righteousness. The

false prophet is with him who works miracles by Satanic power before him, and who deceives those who receive the mark of the beast, or that worship his image. The two heads of Gentile and Jewish power and deception are allied in opposition to Christ. Blasphemous political and religious power combine against Him. As Pontius Pilate, the representative of Roman power, and Herod, king of the Jews, made friends over the rejection of Christ incarnate, so will the head of the revived Roman empire and the false king of the Jews in his false prophetic *rôle* be friends in the coming crisis. Together they reject Christ in glory, and seek to contend against Him. Caught red-handed in wickedness, at the zenith of their apparent success, both are taken alive and cast into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. The lake of fire is prepared for the devil and his angels, but it is also the awful doom of the beast and the false prophet, and of whosoever is not found written in the book of life. (Chap. xix 20; xx. 15.)

The remnant, or the rest, that is, the armies which followed these leaders, are slain upon the earth with the sword which goes out of the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who is called "The Word of God." "And all the fowls," invited to the great supper of God, feast upon the carcasses of the slain. It pictures the utter destruction of the military power of western Europe, before the Lord as Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory and judge the quick or living nations themselves. (Matt. xxv. 31.)

## CHAPTER XX.

“AND 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 a little season.” (Vers. 1-3.) In view of His death upon the cross, Christ had said, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” (John xii. 31.) Although a mighty prince, Satan is already a fallen creature. And a blow was given to his power at Calvary, of which the result will be his utter downfall, and finally his eternal judgment. Driven out of the heavenly sphere, which he now occupies, by Michael the archangel and his angels, as we have seen, he will come down to the earth in a great rage, and will exercise his fourfold power among men. (Rev. xii. 9-12.) Here, in Revelation xx., his short time being over, an angel from heaven, with a key and a great chain in his hand, *lays hold* of him and *binds* him and *casts him into* the abyss, *shutting him up* and *sealing* it over him. And as in chapter xii. 9, so here; his four names are expressly mentioned. It shews in the plainest language how

completely powerless this mighty enemy of God and men will be rendered. In the abyss he will languish as a bound prisoner, with all his power nullified and his malicious and wily schemes utterly frustrated. For a thousand years his draconic power in connection with empire and the political world will cease; his deceptive power as the old serpent will be stopped; his devilish wiles will be destroyed; and his power as Satan, the roaring lion, the great adversary, be brought utterly to nought. He will not be allowed to deceive the nations, as now, any more. To-day men vaunt their power and progress, blinded and deceived by this great and evil prince of the power of the air and god of *this world*. But during the thousand years, when Christ shall wield the sceptre of the glorious world to come, this great foe will be fast bound. If any evil shall manifest itself then, it will proceed<sup>d</sup> from the evil heart within of unregenerate men. (Matt. xv. 19.) The sower of evil, Satan, will no longer be loose as now. The world will no longer lie in the wicked one, but will be ruled in peace and equity by Christ, the appointed Heir of God. But when the thousand years are completed, Satan *must* be loosed again. It is cause for thankfulness that it is only for a little season. We shall see the effects in verses 7-9.

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their

foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Ver. 4.) This remarkable verse, in relation to the world (or age) to come, and to which we briefly referred in chapter vi., requires careful study in order to apprehend its distinct application. It comprehends clearly three classes of saints. First, those who are seated on thrones; secondly, the souls of those beheaded; and thirdly, *those* (for this word is added in the Greek) who had not worshipped the beast. Who are they? The heavenly saints (of the Old and New Testaments) are mentioned for the last time *as elders* in chapter xix. 4; next they are viewed as the bride and invited friends; then as included in the heavenly armies (xix. 14); now a fourth time, as seated on thrones in relation to the thousand years' kingdom. In Daniel vii. 9 the thrones are said to be cast down. It is a mistaken translation. It should read "*set up.*" In Revelation xx. 4 we have the fulfilment of this vision, and the thrones are occupied. "They sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." We read in 1 Corinthians vi. 2, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" In this scripture the hour has come. The heavenly saints are associated with Christ in His kingly rule in that glorious age to come.

But whilst John beholds these saints perfected and set to rule, there are others in the same vision who are in the *unclothed* state. He saw their *souls*. They had been beheaded in a time of pressure and persecution for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God. The language is almost exactly the

same as that used of the souls under the altar of God in chapter vi. 9, 10. No doubt it is the same class, martyred on account of their testimony, after the translation of the heavenly saints, and before the time of the manifestation of the beast in his true colours, and the running out of the last half-week. They lose their heads by beheadal. The guillotine, or some other such deadly judicial weapon, will be very busy in that day of the beginnings of sorrows. (Rev. vi. 9.)

Thirdly, "And *those* [there should be a semi-colon after 'the word of God'] who had not done homage to the beast nor to his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and hand." These, too, are in the disembodied state. They are the martyred saints of the last half-week, when Satan's power has full sway, and the beast is on his throne, the second beast (antichrist or the false prophet) causing the earth-dwellers to do homage to the first beast and his image, under the penalty of death. He also causeth that none may buy nor sell without his mark. (Chap. xiii. 11-17.) There are those who refuse to submit, and in consequence lose their lives. "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Blessed reward of God for their faithfulness. These two classes of martyrs, before and during the last half-week, refusing submission to Satan during his short period of rule, live by divine power. They suffer death, but God causes them to live again. It is resurrection life, for, after speaking of the rest of the dead (the unconverted wicked) in the following verse (which is to be understood paren-

thetically), it adds, "This is the first resurrection." This should make clear to all that there is, so to speak, a supplementary raising of saints between the resurrection and rapture of 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-18 and the close of Daniel's last week. That is, the first resurrection includes these three classes, namely, the heavenly saints (of the Old and New Testaments); the martyrs of the beginnings of sorrows; and those slain under the rule of the beast. Whilst Old Testament scripture speaks of resurrection in comparatively general terms, the New Testament teaches clearly two resurrections, namely, of those who have done good (that is, those who are accounted righteous by faith (Rom. x. 6) and walk in practical righteousness), and of those who have done evil. (Rev. xx. 5, 12, 13.) And of those who have done good there are more than one class, as we have seen, the latter being raised a little later (probably about seven years) than the first class. All reign with Christ the thousand years (that is, as it is variously spoken of, the millennium, or world, or age to come).

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." (Ver. 5.) The rest of the dead would include all who die in the natural unconverted state from Adam onward, through all ages of time down to the close of the reign of Christ. The rest of the dead are the same as those that have done evil. (John v. 29.)

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

(Ver. 6.) It is precious to find that each one who has part in the first resurrection is pronounced both blessed and holy. They suffer here for the name of the blessed and holy Saviour, the Son of God, and they are raised from among the dead by divine power, to share with Him, as blessed and holy ones, the glories of His kingdom. The term "first resurrection" is again employed. The use of the word "first" clearly indicates that there is another. The first is a resurrection to life and glory, the second is a resurrection to eternal judgment. On those who have part in the first, *the second death* hath no power. Now "the second death" is also a clear indication that there are more deaths than one. From the fall onwards man has been morally dead as regards God, separated in sin from Him and exposed to receive sin's wages, which is death. Hence it is appointed unto men once to die. (Heb. ix. 27.) But the same scripture that tells us this (and the whole history of man is a witness to the deeply solemn fact) adds, but "*after this* the judgment." And Revelation xx. 15 says that "*whosoever*" was not found written in the book of life was cast into *the lake of fire*. And in the preceding verse, speaking of the lake of fire, it says, "this is the second death." Hence all men are face to face with these two facts: namely, that the second death, which is the lake of fire, has no power over the believers who have part in the first resurrection; but that this terrible doom (prepared for the devil and his angels) is the awful portion also of all who, doing evil, die in their sins, and are raised to judgment. It is one portion or the other for all.

Moreover, all who have part in the first resurrection shall be priests of God and of Christ. We, as Christians, are already privileged to exercise priestly functions towards God, both in worship and intercession, and in association with Christ, who is the great High Priest. In this coming day, when Christ will sit as King and Priest upon His throne (Zech. vi. 13), we shall be associated with Him as a kingly priesthood, exercising our privileged functions during the whole thousand years.

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.” (Vers. 7-9.) Altogether the expression the “thousand years” is mentioned six times. At its expiry, Satan shall be loosed out of the abyss, which is called “his prison.” (Ver. 7.) The long period of his captivity will not have produced any change in his character. Immediately he is free, he recommences to practice his devilish deception, and he finds many nations ready to be victimised. Nothing either changes the heart of man but the sovereign action of the Spirit and the grace of God. Innocent man listened to Satan’s lie and fell; left to his conscience, he lapsed into violence and corruption; preserved in mercy, he fell into drunkenness and self-exaltation; under law, he

became a transgressor; in the presence of perfection in Christ, he put Him to death; in the presence of the Holy Spirit, he resists Him; borne with in grace, he misuses it for license; in the hour of judgment, he blasphemes; and lastly, in the presence of Christ's manifest glory and perfect, righteous rule, he is ready at the bidding of Satan to gather together to war against Him.

Great as will be the blessing of God for Israel and the nations in that glorious world to come, at the close there is a vast impenitent host, whose number is as the sand of the sea, ready for open rebellion. Satan finds them in all directions, on the four corners of the earth. They are called by the names of Gog and Magog. We first meet with these terms in the Old Testament. In Ezekiel xxxviii. they clearly apply to the vast hosts of Russia and her allies, when swooping down on the land of Palestine just before the close of the judgments which shall usher in the millennium. But here they are employed morally to denote the nations in general which are deceived by Satan. "They went up on the breadth of the earth." Satan sets them in movement apparently in all parts of the earth. Their object is to destroy the whole testimony of God upon the earth, notwithstanding that they had enjoyed the rest and privileges and blessings of Christ's kingdom for so long a period. These innumerable hosts, under the deception of the devil, compass the camp of the saints about and the beloved city. It appears to be the most widespread effort of men under Satan's leadership to blot out every semblance of Christ's authority and grace that the

world in its long sad history has ever known. The camp would set forth the sphere where dwell the saints of God at that day, and the beloved city can surely be none other than Jerusalem, which will again be the capital city of Jehovah's beloved earthly people Israel, who shall all know Him, from the least to the greatest. About to carry out their fell purpose upon outwardly unprotected people, who for a thousand years had laid aside all military power and lived in peace, God intervenes. Like as more than once in Old Testament times, fire comes down from Him out of heaven, and the whole of that wilful and ungodly host is devoured by it. It is apparently the most awful judgment with which God has ever visited man for his wickedness. Both *grace* and *glory* are absolutely refused.

“And 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.” (Ver. 10.) Here we reach the awful doom of the great arch-leader in wickedness, *the devil*. It is worthy of remark, that although his four names are mentioned, both when cast down from heaven to the earth, and when cast into the abyss, only two are mentioned when loosed again. He neither recovers draconic power, nor comes forth in his old serpentine character, but only exercises his deceptive powers as Satan and the devil. (Vers. 8-10.) His final effort to overturn the kingdom of Christ having failed, and his dupes having been devoured by the fiery judgment of God, he himself is cast into the lake of fire, which burneth with brimstone, which was originally pre-

pared for him and for his angels. The beast and the false prophet had already been cast there alive just ere Christ had established His kingdom. They had languished there during the thousand years. The arch-leader, Satan, now joins his two leading victims in that dreadful doom. This is the portion of the anti-trinity. Whilst the triune God—the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost—dwells eternally in the uncreated blessedness and glory of the Godhead, this wretched trio of imitation reap eternally the fruit of their awful wickedness.

We do not suppose for a moment that the lake of fire is to be understood as a lake of *material* fire. We must bear in mind that we find this terrible doom brought forward in a book filled with figures and symbols. But, nevertheless, the reality is as dreadful morally as the image of a lake of fire conveys to our minds viewed materially. It is a definite sphere, set apart by God, out of which there is no escape, where wickedness is eternally punished. Our God, spoken of in relation to Christians, is said to be a consuming fire. (Heb. xii. 29.) He jealously, for His own glory, withers up everything which is not consistent with His holy nature, and must have, to vindicate His glory, an abiding and eternal witness before the whole universe against all unjudged evil. His fiery judgment, searching and penetrating, will rest upon all who are cast into that sphere of unutterable anguish and misery. Day and night, adds this awful scripture, these three great leaders of apostasy and blasphemy and wickedness shall be tormented for *the ages of ages*. Unceasing, abiding and eternal

judgment is their sure and richly deserved portion. Moreover, all evil will be relegated to that awful sphere—the lake of fire.

Chapter xx. closes with the deeply solemn tribunal of the great white throne, where all who have died without God and without Christ during the whole of this world's history will be arraigned. The prophet continues, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." (Ver. 11.) A great white throne conveys the threefold thought of the greatness of the issues connected therewith; that all that transpires there will be in accord with its spotless purity; and supreme power and authority in relation to the judgments of the One who sits thereupon. We are not told in the vision who this is. The name of God is introduced in the next verse in our English translation, but it reads in the original "before *the throne*." John v. 22 and 2 Timothy iv. 1 shew clearly, however, that all judgment, both of the quick and the dead, is committed to the Son, Christ Jesus, who is God. (Heb. i. 8.) Acts xvii. 31 is a further confirmation.

From the face of this holy and glorious One, the earth and the heaven flee away. These two spheres, where Satan and sin have wrought such fearful havoc, flee from His holy presence when He takes His seat as Judge upon the great white throne. No more place is found for them. God's purpose in relation to them will then have been fulfilled. But in chapter xxi. 1 John sees a new heaven and a new earth. In seeking to interpret the Revelation

one has to be careful not to wrest the meaning of the expressions used by the Spirit of God. Whilst the earth and the heaven *flee away*, and no place is found for *them*, we judge that in all probability the *new* heaven and the earth in the age of ages (chap. xxi. 1) are the present ones remodelled and refashioned by divine power in a condition suited to the stable and abiding character of that marvellous scene, the sea, figure of the restlessness and unsettled state of man now, ceasing to exist.\*

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God [or the throne]; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” (Ver. 12.) This is the final judgment of the dead, that is, all who have passed out of this world *unconverted* from the fall onwards till the close of time. Both small and great, raised by divine power to judgment (John v. 29), stand before the throne. First, books are opened. They are full of writing. They appear to contain the records of the works of those arraigned, who are judged accordingly. The book of life is also opened, but the names of this vast host of impenitent men are not found therein. Had their names been written in the book of life, they would not have been found among the ranks of the dead. In that

\* In Isaiah lxx. 17-20, where we get the prophetic word, “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth,” it clearly refers to the blessing of the world (or age) to come, or the millennium, *previous* to Revelation xxii. 1-8.

case life would have been their portion, and they would have come forth to the resurrection of life, and not to the resurrection of judgment. (John v. 29.) No true believer will ever stand before the great white throne. We would here remark that a very clear distinction is maintained in scripture between the duration and the severity of the judgment pronounced and inflicted upon the wicked dead. "*Whosoever* was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 15.) And this takes place after that the earth and the heaven have fled away, and *time has ceased to be*. It is final, irrevocable, *eternal* judgment. (Rev. xx. 12-15.) Men will weep and wail and gnash their teeth in vain (Matt. viii. 12), where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark ix. 42-49.) *But God is just. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Surely. He will vindicate His own glory, and the sentence of each one will be according to absolute righteousness, which all will own. The severity of the punishment will be according to the privileges, the light, and the conduct of each. In Luke xii. 47, 48, we read of few stripes and many. In Matthew x. 15, xi. 24, that it shall be more tolerable for some cities than for others. In Matthew xxiii. 14, that scribes and Pharisees guilty of certain conduct shall receive greater damnation or judgment. And here, too, at the great white throne, it is according to works. These passages and others shew that God makes a difference. The duration of judgment in the lake of fire is eternal, the severity varies. Thank God the true believer "shall not*

*come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life.*" (John v. 24.)

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [or hades] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (Ver. 13.) Nothing can be clearer from this verse than that none can escape. The sea, death and hades all yield up their dead. Tens of thousands have found their graves in the depths of the oceans—sailors, travelers and others. Myriads have passed into the unclothed state, their bodies buried in graves, sepulchres, cremated or otherwise, their immortal souls in hades, the place of departed spirits. All will most assuredly hear the awful summons of the Judge. Divine power will raise all. With God all things are possible. Many ungodly vainly try to escape the agonising thought, and many would gladly devise means to escape. But "it is appointed unto men once to die, and *after this* the judgment." Not a single impenitent soul of Adam's fallen race can escape the threatened doom. God cannot lie. It repeats a second time, "they were judged according to their works," and it adds the words, "*every man.*"

"And death and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire . . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Vers. 14, 15.) The earth and the heaven having departed, and the judgment of the dead having been pronounced, death and hades, no longer needed, are, so to speak, personified, and are cast into the lake of fire. And last of all,

*whosoever* (mark it well, dear reader, lest you should be found included therein) was not found written in the book of life, wherein the names of all who repent and believe the gospel are inscribed, was cast into that same awful sphere of punishment, the lake of fire. It was prepared for the devil and his angels, not for men. Judgment is God's strange work. God has wrought redemption for men. In His great love to the world He gave His only begotten Son to this end. Jesus died for God's glory, and for us, that we might have eternal redemption and eternal life. But if men persist in neglecting, despising or rejecting God's love, refusing to bow to His Son, Lord and Head of all, they must surely reap the awful eternal consequences of their folly. There is no other alternative. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43.) "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) But it is equally, solemnly true, that "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." How will *you* meet Christ, the Son of God? As a Saviour, or as a Judge?

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## CHAPTER XXI.

“AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” (Chap. xxi. 1.) This chapter down to verse 8 brings before us the last of the series of visions to which we have referred, commencing with the words, “And I saw.” It is the only passage which gives us any detail of the state succeeding the kingdom and time, a state which has no end, though there are other passing references to it. It treats of the age to come. From verse 9 and onwards in this chapter it is a fresh subject. It commences with giving a description of the bride, the Lamb’s wife (or the church), in display, in the glory of the thousand year kingdom, prior to the age of ages. The comparison between this description and that of the false church in chapter xvii., which we have already remarked upon, is most striking. It is very easy to distinguish in this twenty-first chapter the difference between that which refers to the age to come—from verse 9 and onward—and the age of ages in the first eight verses, in that in the former it speaks of God and of the Lamb, and in the latter of God only. The reason of this is that during the age to come the kingdom of God is administered by Christ, the Lamb, whereas at the close He gives up the kingdom to the Father, and *God is all in all.*

Turning to the detail, John saw a *new* heaven and a *new* earth. It is the moment when God makes all things *new*, and both the heaven and the earth will be *new* then. All will come fresh from the hand of Him who sits on the throne. (Ver. 5.) It will be an entirely new order of things in both spheres. Neither Satan nor sin will ever have access in either. The former things will have passed away. Both will be the blessed handiwork of God for His own glory, and everything connected therewith in perfect harmony with Himself. The first heaven and the first earth are no more. Notice the contrast between "new" and "first." "And there was no more sea." This is very interesting and instructive, in that scripture compares the wicked to the troubled sea (Isa. lvii. 20); and what has the history of the first earth been but one long chapter of unrest, trouble and misery? "The misery of man is great upon him." (Eccles. viii. 6.) But in that glorious scene of unending blessedness the sea will be no more. All will be stable and fixed. Peace and happiness shall dwell throughout.

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Ver. 2.) It is doubtless the church of God in her never-ending glory. Five things characterise it: holiness, newness, her origin is divine, her source and character heavenly, and her position and adornment that of the bride. Babylon, the false church, is called "that *great* city." (Rev. xviii. 10, 16, 18.) But Jerusalem from above, the true church, is *the holy*

city. Her nature and character will perfectly harmonise with the nature of God, and with the character of the scene in which she will be set. All is holy there. She is *new*. Jerusalem will be in accord with the scene where God makes all things new. During the thousand years' reign, she is called holy, but not new. Among the promises to the overcomer in Philadelphia, we read, "I will write upon him . . . the name of the city of my God, which is *new* Jerusalem." (Rev. iii. 12.) The origin of this city is divine. Its builder and maker is God. Her source and character are entirely heavenly. Those who compose it are heavenly ones. And though, as we shall see, she is viewed as the bride, the Lamb's wife, during the kingdom, when she comes forth after its close, in the glory of the never-ending age of ages, she has lost none of her first beauty, but is seen prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, as on the day of her espousals.

"And I heard a great voice out of the heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Ver. 3.) The prophet hears next a great voice out of heaven announcing an event of momentous importance. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." The word "behold" in scripture, as we have already remarked, calls attention to something of moment. The tabernacle, which signifies the dwelling-place of God, refers, we think there can be no doubt, to the city above referred to, the church, as that in which God will

dwell. And it will be "with men." There will be no more distinction between Jew and Gentile. Since redemption came in, it was always God's thought to dwell among His people. We find the same thing in relation to Israel (Exo. xxv. 8), the church now (Eph. ii. 22), in the kingdom (Ezek. xliii. 1-6), and here again in the age of ages. Sin being finally removed, fruit of Christ's death (Heb. ix. 26), the present moral distance between heaven and earth will completely have ceased; hence there is proximity between God in His tabernacle (the church) and men. There is apparently no revelation as to who these men are, and how they come on to this new earth. But, as we have seen, fire destroys all God's enemies upon the earth at the close of the kingdom. (Rev. xx. 9.) Nothing is, however, said as to what becomes of the vast millennial population, whether Israel or the Gentiles, who are loyal to Christ, when Satan makes his final effort to overthrow Christ's power. We think it probable that the men here in view are this population, preserved by divine power for this endless blessing. It goes on to say four things concerning them: first, that God will dwell with them; secondly, they shall be His people; thirdly, God Himself shall be with them; and, lastly, He shall be "their God." What a marvellous scene of blessing it will be for both the church and for men in this glorious age of ages!

"And 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."<sup>14</sup>

(Ver. 4.) What a lovely witness of the kindness and tenderness of God! He knows full well all the sorrows and sufferings of men under the reign of the usurper Satan and through the working of sin to-day! The harrowing scenes of the battle-field and of the hospital, fruits of Satanic power and human self-will and lust, do not pass unnoticed by Him, who overrules the cruel and malicious rule of the wicked one in whom the whole world lieth. Permitted for the moment in His inscrutable wisdom, He uses them for the chastening, rebuke and governmental judgment of men on account of their evil heart and ways, but the moment is rapidly approaching when, after the great catastrophe of which the Revelation so widely treats has passed, rich blessing will flow in the kingdom of Christ, and the misery of man widely and greatly modified under His beneficent rule. And when time is no more, in the eternal scene of ever-abiding blessedness, God Himself shall assuage the tears of His people. Death, whose dark shadow hovers now over all lands, knocking at every door, from palace to cottage, shall cease to demand its victims. Sorrow, crying and pain which now fill the world, groaning under Satan, sin and death, shall be no more. These things, here called "former things," will have passed away for ever. Life and peace and joy and happiness will fill that new earth. The presence of God, and God who is love, will be the blessing, joy and solace of every heart. He who promises these things is able also to perform. With Him all things are possible. (Matt. xix. 26.) He is strong who executeth His word.

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.” (Ver. 5.) The enthroned One declares that He will make all things new. He will introduce an entirely new order of things altogether. Everything will be fashioned anew by His mighty power and wisdom for the glory of His great and holy name. What a comfort and solace for the heart of the tried Christian in the midst of the many evils of the present sorrowful and confused order of things! And He told John to write, for these words are true and faithful. Unlike many of the false and unfaithful words of men, these words are to be fully relied upon. They are true, however many may doubt or deny them. They are faithful, He will most assuredly bring them all to pass. He would have them recorded by His servant, thus giving to His people His faithful written pledge.

“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Vers. 6-8.) Again the enthroned One speaks to His servant, saying, “It is done.” He has here come to the end of the revelation of His ways with men, that which follows, from verse

9, as we have already seen, giving detail of that which has its fulfilment in the kingdom of Christ, previous to the age of ages. When this latter unending age comes in, all is done that God has promised, and the blessing which exceeds all human apprehension is fixed and abiding to all generations of the age of ages. (Eph. iii. 21.) In view of it all, He further presents Himself as the Alpha and Omega (that is, the A and the Z), the beginning and the end. None come before Him and none after Him. And the passage closes with two of the most blessed promises of scripture, and with an awful and wide-reaching threat.

The first promise is to the *thirsty* soul. In view of His glorious and blessed promises, which we have been considering, He whose eyes are running to and fro in the earth is looking out for thirsty ones in the waterless desert of sin that He may quench their thirst. He does not invite them here to come and to drink of the life-giving rivers which He causes to flow so freely. It is better than that. To him that is athirst He says, "*I will give.*" And not merely of the flowing rivers, but of the very fountain thereof. He brings, as it were, the very fountain to his parched lips. The *fountain* of the water of life. And the terms are "*freely.*" He who paid the ransom price in His own death and bloodshedding at Calvary longs to pour the water of life freely from the very fountain thereof into the thirsty soul. And all such, with their thirst quenched and their souls satisfied, will have part in the above promises of God.

The second promise is to the overcomer. This

every Christian should be. We are surrounded with the powers of evil and darkness, and are called to sustain conflict with them. And God encourages us with one more precious promise before He closes. He that gets the victory (which is the force of overcoming) shall inherit all things, or more correctly, *these* things, that is, the things spoken of in these blessed promises in relation to the age of ages.\* "I will be his God, and he shall be my son." How deeply precious! Mark the individual character of it. Generally, when scripture speaks of our position and relationship as sons and children, we are presented collectively. But here it is promised to the individual overcomer, that He will be "his God." What fathomless volumes of blessing that speaks! And "he shall be my son." A son of God for eternity! Who can grasp the fulness of blessing comprised in that short, blessed statement? It is the eternal relationship and position of the overcomer.

On the other hand, how deeply solemn is the contrast in the eighth verse. Whilst nothing could be more free and liberal than His promises to those who receive the living water and to those who overcome for Him, nothing could be more awful and searching that this final threat of the living God (into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall (Heb. x. 31)) against all classes of the impenitent and ungodly. Mark well, dear reader, that it is brought in after John had *seen in the*

\* We judge that the Spirit lays stress on these things in addition to other promises.

*vision* the earth and heaven fleeing away when time had ceased to be, and when God has an eternity of blessing in view for His saints. It gives a detailed list of those who will be cast into the lake of fire. First, "the fearful," those who for fear of the consequences of confessing Christ never decide for Him. Then "the unbelieving," who fail in their responsibility to bow to the gospel concerning the Son of God, which is for obedience of faith among all the nations (Rom. i. 5); or to whatever testimony may have been rendered to them. And "sinners" (adds the original), who practise sin, and shew they are of the devil. (1 John iii. 8-10.) Next, "those who make themselves abominable." (Rom. i. 25-28.) And "murderers," who kill their fellows, made originally in the image and likeness of the Lord God. (1 John iii. 15.) And "whoremongers," who contravene the divine order in creation. (Heb. xiii. 4.) And "sorcerers," who dabble with evil spirits, duped by Satan. (Jer. xxvii. 9; Mal. iii. 5:) And "idolaters," who disown the one true God, and worship stocks and stones, the images of false gods. (1 Cor. vi. 9; x. 7.) And "all liars," mark it well, *all* liars, all who give the lie to God's truth, as well as all who deceive and cheat their neighbour to enrich themselves, or to escape the consequences of their own evil doings. All these shall have their part in the lake, to which is added the solemn words, "which burneth with fire and brimstone," which we have already sought elsewhere to describe. It adds, "which is the second death." Now the very fact of it being called "the *second*

death" shews clearly that the first death (the death of the body) is not cessation of existence, as many vainly assert. And death, in the sense in which we mostly employ the term, that is, the death of the body (or, if we may so speak, the first death), not being a cessation of existence (for the soul lives on), it clearly shews that the term second death does not imply it either. Nay, death is *separation from God*. Whether applied to the state of man as morally separated from God through the fall (Gen. ii. 17), or to the separation of soul and body (2 Cor. v. 4), or to the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 14), it cannot mean that the one in that condition has ceased to exist.

From verse 9 onwards we have a fresh subject. It would have been more helpful to the ordinary reader, enabling him more easily to rightly divide this part of the book, if the previous eight verses had been added to chapter xx., as that which is therein set forth closes the series of visions in ordered sequence, which begin at chapter xix. 17, each one commencing, as we have remarked, with the words, "And I saw." But chapter xxi. 9 carries our thoughts back again (as so often in the Revelation), and brings before us the glory of the true church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, during the thousand years' reign. And, as we have also dwelt on, it is set forth in striking contrast to the description of the false church in the opening of chapter xvii. Let us now seek to apprehend the spiritual force of what is presented. "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials [or bowls] full of the seven last

plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." (Ver. 9.) How gracious of God to encourage our hearts by the revelation of this glorious vision! He would have us appreciate it spiritually now, as we wait to have part in it in actuality in the coming glorious day of display. And where it is so it cannot fail to produce a deep moral effect upon our walk and ways, and the desire that the same Christ who shall shine so wondrously in His people in the heavenly glory of the kingdom, should shine in us, and be morally reflected in us now. An angel of the same seven who shewed John the false woman and her judgment, now shews him the true bride and her glory. She had become the wife of the Lamb. She is one with the holy One who, as the Lamb without blemish, died on Calvary, and lives the triumphant Victor and Saviour in glory. She is shewn to John as the holy city Jerusalem. (Ver. 10.) It will be the joy and delight of Christ's blessed heart not only to present her to Himself glorious, but to display her before a wondering world, angels and men, in the character of the glorious city of God. Who, with his highest thought, can rise to the thoughts of God concerning the One whom He delights to honour, and the wondrous relationship, privilege and blessing of His bride, the church?

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper

stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Vers. 10-14.) Both a suitable condition and a suitable standpoint were needed for the prophet before he could be shewn the glory of the holy city. Hence he is carried away by the angel "in the Spirit" to a mountain "great and high." He must be in the Spirit to see this spiritual vision, and above the natural influences of this earth. And then it had to be *shewn* him. An important principle is involved in this for the Christian. It is not difficult if we stand morally apart from things down here to see that which is false and evil. But things spiritual and heavenly can only be apprehended and appreciated as we live and walk in the Spirit, and even then it is divine grace which shews them to us. The words "that great" are an interpolation. They were put in erroneously by the translators. That which characterises the true church is holiness, not greatness. That *great* city applies to the false church, Babylon. (Rev. xvii. 5.) Here it should read "the *holy* city, Jerusalem." Four things are spoken of her. She is holy. She is heavenly. Her origin is a divine one. She is the vessel of God's glory. Descending out of heaven she takes her place in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom in

display when God shall head up all things in Christ in heaven and in earth. There are different spheres called heaven in scripture which must not be confounded together. The first bride, Eve, the wife of Adam, conjointly with him robbed God of His glory in the first act of disobedience, at the instigation of the serpent. The bride of the Lamb, His wife, as the holy city, is the chosen vessel of God, which has the glory of God, when the serpent shall be bound. Marvellous wisdom and grace! God's heavenly saints once born in nature's darkness, and who had sinned in self-will and come short of His glory (Rom. iii. 23), not only will be in His glory in that rapidly approaching day, but will compose the city which is the vessel of its display.\*

"Her light [or shining†] was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." To whom could this lovely figure refer but to Christ? More or less all through scripture He is spoken of as a stone. (Dan. ii. 34; Luke xx. 18.) Peter calls Him a precious stone. Here the shining light of the holy city is like unto a *most precious stone!* Most precious! None can be compared with Him. And like a jasper without flaw, clear as crystal: He is the perfect, holy, transparent One. From whom could the city receive her shining but from Him who is Light itself, the One who is the effulgence of the glory of God.‡

\* The saints of the old Testament will also have part in the city. (Heb. xi. 10, 16.)

† The Lamb is the light thereof. (Chap. xxi. 23.)

‡ It is to be noticed that the One seated on the throne in Reve-

“And had a wall great and high.” The walls of the earthly city of Jerusalem are called “Salvation.” (Isa. xxvi. 1.) From this we may gather the significance of the walls of the holy city on high. It is where the elect of God enjoy in actuality in all its blessed fulness “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2 Tim. ii. 10.) The gates of hades could not prevail against the church on earth. (Matt. xvi. 18.) Here, where there is no foe, the moral thought of the wall is that of security. The glory of God is there, and it is divinely secure.

“And had twelve gates.” The gates of the earthly city of Jerusalem are called “Praise.” (Isa. lx. 18.) How much more the gates of the heavenly city! Twelve denotes administrative completeness. Three face each quarter of the compass. The administration of the earthly kingdom will proceed by the way of the gates from the heavenly city. At the gates are twelve angels, the willing doorkeepers, as another has said, of the heavenly city. And the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel are inscribed thereon,

lation iv. is seen in the vision like unto *jasper* and a sardine stone, and is addressed as the Lord God Almighty (ver. 8), and as the Lord and Creator. (Ver. 11.) And we know that all judgment is committed unto the Son (John v. 22), and that He is Lord of all, and Creator of all things. (John i. 3; Heb. i. 2.) In chapter xxi. 22 the Lamb is spoken of as well as the Lord God Almighty. To understand this we must remember that the Son is both God and man. His holy Person is inscrutable and indivisible, but He is distinguished as both in scripture. (Heb. i. 8, 9.) We get a similar presentation of things in Daniel vii. In verses 9-14 He comes as Son of man to the Ancient of days; in verse 22 He is presented as the Ancient of days.

which, we judge, would further shew the connection of the heavenly city with the earth at that day, for Israel will then be regathered and blessed in the holy land, the head of the nations and not the tail (Deut. xxviii. 13), blossoming, budding and filling the world with fruit. (Isa. xxvii. 6.)

“And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” (Ver. 14.) Abraham looked for a city which had foundations. (Heb. xi. 10.) Here the wall of the city has twelve. Founded on the ministry of the twelve apostles on earth, the fruit of their labour is seen in this wondrous manner, as the perfect, solid and sure foundation of the wall of the holy Jerusalem, which shall be “compact together” like the earthly city. (Psa. cxxii. 3.) The names inscribed therein are those of the twelve apostles of *the Lamb*. Paul’s writings do not speak of the Lamb, though surely filled with the glory of Him who is it. But as the holy city in display, the church is not here viewed in the aspect in which his writings present it.

“And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.” (Vers. 15, 16.) In Ezekiel xl. the man whose appearance was like brass had a line of flax and a measuring reed of six cubits to measure the house of God and the land. (Chap. xl. 3.) Here the angel has a golden reed, and the

measure is that of a man, that is, of the angel, (Ver. 17.) It is *golden*, in keeping with the character of the city to be measured, which is of pure gold. (Ver. 18.) All is absolute righteousness as well as holiness there. The city is seen as a cube in the vision. It lieth foursquare. The length is as large as the breadth—one thousand five hundred miles—that is, reckoning by a stadia, which is the Greek word signifying about the distance of a furlong. The height, too, is the same, which shews the necessity of keeping clear of material thoughts in studying such a passage. All is divinely formed and perfect. The measures are great but *finite*. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. It is to be noted that whilst in Ephesians iii. 18, where it is a question of the apprehension with all saints of inconceivable glory, depth is also mentioned, here it is omitted. May it not signify that behind all that is revealed and manifested in relation to the heavenly and holy city there are depths of God unfathomable which the Spirit searcheth?

“And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.” (Vers. 17, 18.) The measure of the wall is the multiple of twelve, which in itself is complete. It is in accord with a man’s measure, that is, of the angel, who (though as a ministering spirit he would be invisible) apparently was seen by John in the appearance of a man, which often occurs in scripture. (Acts i. 10.)

The building of the wall was seen in the vision as of jasper, the same as the appearance of the city's shining. (Ver. 11.) And the city itself was pure gold, like unto clear glass. There is nothing there but what is in full and perfect harmony with the thoughts of God. Purity and righteousness characterise it throughout. But it is not said, "clear as crystal" as in verse 11, where it appears to present Christ, who is God, man having nought to do with the existence of crystal, but likened unto "clear glass," for the city is the church, transparent like Christ, through grace, but formed and fashioned.

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation [was] jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst." (Vers. 19, 20.) These varied coloured precious stones, which adorn the foundations of the wall (and which were also on the breastplate of the high priest), in which, as we have seen, were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, appear to set forth the reflection of the divine glory,\* which shone first in perfection in Him, then on and through the apostles by the power of His Spirit

\* "It is the radiancy of divine glory reflected and manifested in its varied beauty in the creature, and this in its most immediate relationship with God, and radiancy of divine light on and through the creature."—J. N. D.

(which should also shine now morally in relation to us), and which in that day shall shine on and through His heavenly saints when they shall occupy their assigned place in the holy city in the heavenly glory of the kingdom.

“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” (Ver. 21.) In the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew xiii. we get the figure of a pearl of great price, which when a merchantman found he went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Vers. 45, 46.) The merchantman sets forth Christ, the pearl of great price, the church in her moral beauty and value and unity. Christ, though rich, became poor that He might purchase it. The great price was His own precious life’s blood. He gave Himself for it. (Eph. v. 25.) In the coming day the twelve gates of the holy city on high are twelve pearls. “Each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl.” (New Trans.) The moral beauty of the church shines at every gate. “And the street of the city” is, so to speak, paved with purity, righteousness and holiness. It was of “pure gold.” There is no alloy there. Like the city generally in verse 18, the pure gold of the street is as clear as transparent glass. Perfect transparency wholly characterises it.

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” (Ver. 22.) The prophet sees no temple in the holy city, as is characteristic of Jerusalem on earth, when in recognised relationship with God. But

Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, the One who sits on the throne in Revelation iv. 2, 3, 8, and the Lamb are the temple of it. The introduction here of Old Testament titles of God raises a point full of interest. Many have inquired, whilst fully granting that the holy city, the bride, the Lamb's wife, is the church, where the Old Testament saints are in this glorious scene. Now, although scripture is clear that the church, or assembly, is only composed of saints from the day of Pentecost until the rapture (Matt. xvi. 18; Eph. ii. 21), it is also clear that the Old Testament saints looked for a city on high. (Heb. xi. 10, 16.) They were called to heaven. Hence it is thought by many that, whilst the city is a figure of the church, there are indications that the Old Testament saints will occupy a position in relation to it, assigned to them of God. The title of the Lord God Almighty, and in verses 5, 6 of the Lord God, and of the Lord God of the holy prophets, appear to confirm this thought. And we think that *the servants* of chapter xxii. 3, 4, quite a different presentation of His saints from the figures of the city itself, may probably (like also the elders in chapters iv., v.) include both the Old and the New Testament saints. Hence you get the Lord God Almighty of the Old, and the Lamb of the New, who are both said to be the temple of the city.

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light [or lamp] thereof.” (Ver. 23.) Man on earth needs the sun and the moon, and God provided these beautiful

heavenly luminaries to administer light, and to rule the day and night. But there is no need either of the luminary which rules, or the one which reflects in that wondrous city of God. His own glory irradiates throughout, illuminating all with its penetrating beams of blessing. And the Lamb, the true Light, refused by a world which loved darkness, shall be the burning and shining lamp of the heavenly capital of the kingdom.

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into [to] it.” (Ver. 24.) The nations on earth walk by the light of this city. The words “them which are saved” are not found in the original. The glory of the heavenly city will produce a wondrous enlightening moral effect on the nations on the earth. In Isaiah lx. 3 the Gentiles come to the light, and kings to the brightness of the rising of the earthly Jerusalem and her people. But here the nations are viewed as walking by the light of Jerusalem on high. And the kings of the earth bring their glory to it. The words “and honour” should also be omitted. Christ shall reign with His heavenly saints over the earth, and the shekinah glory shall dwell between the cherubim in the temple of Jerusalem rebuilt on earth. (Psa. xcix.) And all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him. (Psa. lxxii.)

“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into [to] it.” (Vers. 25, 26.) All is one bright day,

in this glorious heavenly metropolis; the darkness of night is unknown within the glorious walls of the heavenly city of salvation. Hence there shall be no shutting of the gates of pearl, as men shut the gates of their cities in this world, where enemies surround and abound. And the nations shall not only bring their glory to it like the kings, but their honour also.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Ver. 27.) The city is strictly guarded by divine power. Divine grace and love builds the glorious city of His own elect, but divine righteousness and power will rigidly exclude everything that is unfit for its glorious precincts. There shall in no wise enter anything common or defiling, nor that maketh an abomination and a lie. Satan has filled the world with these things to-day. Millions, unclean morally, defile themselves; millions follow all kinds of abominable idolatries; millions love his lie rather than the truth. Not one such shall enter God’s city. Those, and those only, whose names are inscribed by God in the book of life of the Lamb. (Rev. xx. 15; xxii. 19.)

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## CHAPTER XXII.

THE opening of this last chapter of the Revelation continues the description of things connected with the holy city above during Messiah's glorious reign. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Vers. 1, 2.) First, John sees a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb in the midst of the city (see ver. 3), which ministers refreshment, life, and blessing. On either side of the river, and in the midst of the street, grows the tree of life. At the outset when man disobeyed and fell, God in mercy guarded the way to the tree of life. In this coming happy scene the tree of life yields monthly all manner of fruit for the joy and satisfaction of the heavenly inhabitants of the city; and the leaves thereof have the property of healing the nations of the earth. Life, fruit, and health are the blessed outcome of the flowing crystal river.

"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever." (Vers. 3-5.) "And there shall be no more curse." How deeply blessed! Already Christ, God's Son, has borne the curse on Calvary. In this coming day the curse shall be removed from the earth. Thorns and briars shall cease; the desert shall blossom as the rose; and the earth shall yield her increase. (Psa. lxvii. 6.) The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be established in the heavenly city, and justice and judgment administered throughout the kingdom. His servants in that glorious sphere shall be privileged not only to serve Him, but also to behold His face. And they shall bear His name on their foreheads, being thus openly recognised as associated with Him. Having confessed His name on earth before men, He will openly confess them. His name shall be stamped upon their brows.

"And there shall be no night there." Neither candle (nor lamp), artificial light, nor light of the sun, natural light, will be needed in that glorious sphere, where darkness never penetrates. The Lord God, who is the very source of light, will give light to the heavenly inhabitants of the holy city. And having been associated with Christ through grace, they shall reign for ever and ever, or to the age of ages.

"And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold,

I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the saying of the prophecy of this book." (Vers. 6, 7.) The angel assures John of the faithful and true character of these sayings (or words) that we have been dwelling upon. In the opening of this book, as we saw, God gave the revelation to Jesus Christ, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John, who bare record. (Chap. i. 1, 2.) Here the confirmatory language is slightly different. The Lord God of the holy prophets, by whom He spake of old, sent His angel to shew unto His servants things which *must* shortly be done. Nearly nineteen centuries have elapsed since this word went forth. We are on the eve of its fulfilment. All the promises of God, exceeding rich and precious, are Yea and Amen in the risen Christ. (2 Cor. i. 19, 20.) He will surely fulfil them. They *must shortly be done*. "Behold, I come quickly." Here we get the blessed promise of His speedy advent, repeated in verses 12 and 20. Christ is coming quickly, He will establish His rights, He will change the present order of things, and He will establish His kingdom in power, glory and blessing. Blessing is pronounced on the one who keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book. It is confirmatory of the blessing of chapter i. 3, and shews the importance of reading, hearing and keeping the things written therein. This is impossible, if, as many do, we only study the commencement and the close of this marvellous prophecy. The "sayings" are found in all parts of the book. God expects us to listen

to every one of them, and to "keep" them. Let us take heed that we do not miss the blessings attendant thereupon.

"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." (Ver. 8, 9.) John tells us expressly that he both saw and heard these things. And they produced such an effect upon him that he fell down at the feet of the angel who shewed them to him. But angels are not the objects of worship, and he forbade him, telling him that he was likewise a servant, fellow-servant of John's, and of his brethren the prophets of old, by whom the Lord God had spoken in former days, as also of those who in the day of grace keep the sayings of this book. He was not to worship the angel-messenger, but Him whose servant he was. "Worship God."

"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Vers. 10-12.) Daniel, at the end of his prophecy, was told to shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end. (Chap. xii. 4.) But the sayings

of the prophecy of *this* book were not to be sealed, the bulk of its contents being connected with the time of the end, for the time is at hand or near. The coming of the Lord in power would complete and change all. In view of this climax, mention is made of four classes, the unjust, the filthy, the righteous and the holy. Speaking broadly, all men will be found under one of these categories. It is a deeply solemn scripture, in view of the Lord's return. His eyes run to and fro in the earth, beholding the evil and the good. (Prov. xv. 3.) Some practise unrighteousness, others wallow in moral filth and corruption. Some practise righteousness in their walk and ways, yet are not set apart to God; others are sanctified to Him and walk in paths of holiness for His name's sake. Every man shall give an account of himself to God. The day of grace and forbearance is on the very eve of closing in judgment. Hence the character of the language employed here. The state of unrighteousness and filth was so pronounced, that repentance seems hopeless. On the other hand, there were some characterised by righteousness and holiness. To each one is said, "let him be so still." Each one will be made manifest, and each one will be rewarded according as his own work shall be. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me." Christ will mete out to the ungodly richly merited judgment. He will reward His own, who, fruit of His grace to them and of the power and operation of His Spirit, walk in righteousness and holiness to the glory of His name. The scrutiny and the reward are alike

individual. Not one is exempted. Every one will be fully manifested in his true character at that day.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." (Ver. 13.) In chapter i. 8 the Lord saith, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," or the A and the Z. The words "the beginning and the end," added in that verse in our English translation, are not in the original text. In chapter i. 17 He saith, "I am the first and the last." To these words, here repeated, are added "the beginning and the end." He is all three. None comes before Him, none after Him. He is before and after all things. He is the beginning of God's way, and He is the end. All things circle around and centre in this glorious Person.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments [or wash their robes], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." (Vers. 14, 15.) The right to partake of the tree of life and of ingress to the city is given to those who wash their robes; they are pronounced blessed. Putting it on the ground of doing the Lord's commandments (deeply important as is that also in its place), as the translators have erroneously done, is a denial of the whole fundamental truth of the gospel. God's blessing can only be received on the ground of faith, not of works. (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) Christ came and died, and His precious blood was shed. By faith in Him and in His blood we are

justified. Every one must be washed to enter His presence. Whoever may be in view in this precious verse, he must wash his clothes (no doubt a figure) to have right to the tree of life (approach to which was barred on earth since the fall) and to enter the gates of the city. Blessed is every one who does!\*

Six classes of sinners are enumerated as *without*, a list in some respects similar to chapter xxi. 8. They can never have access there. There are dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters and liars. Dogs are unclean persons (Matt. vii. 6; Phil. iii. 2); sorcerers, those who dabble in witchcraft, spiritualism, necromancy (Jer. xxvii. 9); whoremongers, those who contravene wickedly God's order among men in creation (Heb. xiii. 4); murderers, those who are guilty of shedding their neighbour's blood unlawfully (1 Pet. iv. 15; 1 John iii. 15); idolaters, those who worship false gods instead of the true (1 Cor. vi. 9); and whosoever loveth a lie or maketh a lie, and no lie is of the truth. (1 John ii. 21.)

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Vers. 16, 17.) "I Jesus." It is a beautiful expression, which bespeaks volumes to the believing heart!. The

\* The thought of garments or robes being washed and clean characterises the Revelation. It is in relation to the kingdom.

same blessed One to whom the Revelation was given (chap. i. 1), who sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, here sends His angel to testify these precious and solemn things "to you in the assemblies." The testimony is "borne" to every individual in every assembly everywhere, and throughout the period of the church's sojourn on earth.

The One who, addressing us, calls Himself "I Jesus," adds, "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star." He is the root, David's Lord. And He is the offspring of David. Born into this world, He is of David's lineage, his Son. And not only so, He is both the bright and morning star, the bright shining harbinger of the coming day, and the One who is coming to establish His kingdom, and to reign as Son of David, arising as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings. (Mal. iv. 2.) But first we behold Him by faith and in the Spirit's power as the heavenly hope of His people, the One who is the bright and morning star. The Lord Himself shall descend, and call us on high, and will thereafter display us with Himself in glory. The Spirit, a divine Person here, says to Him above, Come. Led by the Spirit, and in conjunction with Him, the bride, the church, re-echoes, Come. The Spirit desires the consummation of the promises and purposes of God, which are to be fulfilled at Christ's return. Likewise the bride, who also with heartfelt responsive affection to the love of the heavenly Bridegroom, longs for the consummation of their mutual joy, and the entrance

of the rejected One with power and glory upon His rights.

“And let him that heareth say, Come.” Every individual who hears the Spirit’s voice in the midst of the din of this world, and into whose heart the above blessed presentation of Christ sinks down, is privileged to join in the cry, saying, “Come.” Then follows, in view of His speedy return, another precious invitation, ere it shall be too late. “Let him that is athirst come.” The thirsty soul, the one who is awakened by the Spirit of God, whoever and wherever he may be (for surely no one is excluded), is invited to come. We would ask you, dear reader, have you come? You may be moral, religious, well acquainted with the Book of the Revelation, and the Bible in general, and yet perhaps you have never thirsted, and consequently you have never come to that which satisfies. It is not too late; “Come.” Come now. “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “Whosoever will.” It is a world-wide word, which includes all, and excludes none. But how about *your will*. Christ had to complain, saying, “Ye *will not* come.” Whosoever *will* is invited to take of the water of life freely. But whosoever *will not*, will remain with unquenched thirst, both in this world, and for ever. The water of life is free. It is offered as freely as it flows. The difficulty is on man’s side. His will comes in the way. If you, dear reader, have not yet done so, will you take it *now*? Nothing else can satisfy. And you shall never go where one begs for only a drop of water to cool his parched tongue. (Luke xvi. 24.) Alas, for him it was *too late!*

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” (Vers. 18, 19.) We have spoken of the testimony of Jesus to those in the assemblies, and we have also dwelt upon the final double promise of blessing. Before closing the book the same gracious One adds a solemn warning *to every one* who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. Both the one who *adds to* these words, and the one who *takes from* them, is threatened with judgment. The former shall have part in the awful *plagues* we have dwelt upon in the course of the exposition of this book. As for the latter his part shall be taken away from *the tree of life* (so it should read, not the book of life), and out of *the holy city*, which are written in this book. (See New Trans.)

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Ver. 20.) Once more, ere the Revelation closes, our Lord, who testifies these things, repeats the promise of His quick return, emphasising it with the word Surely, or *Yea*. Three times, as said, He promises to come quickly, at the close of this marvellous prophecy. First, in view thereof, He pronounces blessing on the one who keeps the sayings therein; secondly, He will reward every

one according to his works; and, lastly, He adds, "Yea, I come quickly," the One whose revelation it is. This last precious promise, wondrous and world-wide in its effects, elicits the response, "Amen; come, Lord Jesus." The whole book testifies to the truth of the words of the prophet, "Overturn, overturn, overturn . . . until he come whose right it is." (Ezek. xxi. 27.) His return (and we are on the eve of it) will be fraught with momentous results for all. Blessing, marvellous blessing for every one who believes on His name and who follows His steps, awaiting His return to accomplish His promises. Judgment, inexorable judgment for every one who believeth not, but follows his own will and way, living in sin without Him.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Thus ends this wondrous book. It discloses the utter failure of that which professes His name during the hour of His absence, and the judgments that will usher in the day of His manifestation and glory. "The grace" of this blessed and glorious One, our Lord Jesus Christ, says the prophet, "be with *you all*," that is, with all the saints; with all who know His love, and who, responding thereto in sincerity and in incorruption, manifest by a faithful life and testimony that they are His. His grace be with *you all*. *Amen*.

E. H. C.