

LECTURES ON
THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION.

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PREFACE.



N such a portion of the Word of God as the Epistles of John, the extant commentaries are comparatively few. To assign a valid reason for this fact would not be difficult. But with the Revelation it has fared otherwise; the number of its expositors is truly legion. Yet by many it has been judged advisable to publish in this form, this other aid to the study of this Book. As most readers are probably aware, it has already appeared in successive numbers of *The Latter-Rain*; but there are those who prefer to have a continued exposition bound in a volume, than in its original shape, in a series of articles in that periodical.

The book is a small one. That will be a recommendation to some who have not an abundance of leisure. The object aimed at has been to assist the student of the Word in his own examination and grasp of the teaching of this precious portion of God's Word. Some of the most difficult chapters in the Bible are passed in review in the following pages, as Rev. iv., Rev. ix., and incidentally, that obscure chapter, Dan. x.; of the former two, each in its proper place, the last at page 188. And if the

hints offered be compared with the hints of previous writers on these chapters, it will be seen why there was thought to be still room for this additional commentary.

The general plan pursued, has been to get at the leading principles, and at the main threads of this book, rather than to be much occupied in the details. Thus, for instance, in the exposition of the Seals, since the designed unity and connection of these judgments will be readily admitted, the endeavour has been to get at the scope or drift of the series as a whole, by more narrowly marking the effect of the later ones; then, when that final result of all has been ascertained, the light obtained therefrom can be safely carried back in elucidation of the previous ones, as showing in what direction each one was tending; and in this simple way, we have earnestly attempted to avoid all conjecture. We have felt we were handling God's Word, which is given to show us His glory, and to sanctify our hearts, and not to amuse our fancies.

May God abundantly bless the effort, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

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LECTURES ON THE
BOOK OF THE REVELATION.

LECTURE I.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

I BELIEVE it is of the Lord that I have been led to expound the Epistles of John, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and now to commence the exposition of the Book of the Revelation. I have not sought this work for my own glory. I had felt that the Lord had Himself shown to me much as to the general teaching of these scriptures. And in response to various invitations from divers places, I had, over and over again, lectured thereon. But even then I never thought of printing my remarks. But when these lectures were taken down, and sometimes incorrectly or inadequately reported, I could but consent on request to enforce and enlarge

in print upon what I had stated. So may the Lord in His mercy, vouchsafe His own abundant blessing on this effort to serve Him.

Also the peculiar character of these particular books on which I have been led to comment so publicly, arrests my attention. For they are precisely these very books that many others, as well as myself, have felt to be specially useful; yea, absolutely requisite in these last days. Thus, at a period of abounding, yet empty profession, such as the present day is, how extremely valuable is the Epistle of John, where we have traced for us by the Spirit of God, what the divine life in a human soul is—what it is in deed and in truth to be a son of the living God. Also the second and third epistles of the same apostle, though containing very few verses, yet have many most important hints as to this life divine, specially instructing us, as I think I have proved in my lecture thereon, as to the right course for each child of God to pursue, both individually and ecclesiastically, whilst in presence of the felt difficulties that in these closing days beset the path of those who desire to be faithful before God. So, too, with the Epistle to the Hebrews. One glance at the Sin-Purger enthroned in the uncreated brightness of divine Majesty, if directed with that intelligence which this epistle is so calculated to create;—and then at once the conscience of such a beholder is,

as the Holy Ghost there largely explains, perfected for ever. Oh, the value of this epistle is immense, both negatively in view of the formalism of the mass, and positively as regards the establishment of the soul in abiding peace and joy before God. Then as to the Book of the Revelation. Its right use is to be for a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day Star arise in the heart. He that heareth the words of this prophecy ought and will speedily utter the cry, as he is enjoined to do, "Come, Lord Jesus." And it will disclose to Him the impending judgment of the various forms of apostasy all around him, in order that he may be sanctified, that is, separated to God, therefrom.

It is commonly urged, indeed, as the staple objection to the futurist interpretation of this book: Why should the history of the last seven years, or at most but little more, before the appearing of Christ, occupy so much of the Spirit's tracing in this Scripture? What is the extreme and especial value to us of a book that is, as you maintain, so nearly all occupied with events which are to transpire here only after the Church has been removed to her heavenly home? Is it not much more practical, and therefore more probable, to regard the book as sketching the entire career of the Church, or the entire action of the world towards her throughout these past eighteen centuries? The reply to this specious form of

argument—and I submit that the reply is a complete one—is that this book pictures those evil principles when they have come to maturity which professors now love and defend, and which even Christians themselves need to be warned of. Such principles—the very same as in that book are seen to be ripe for judgment—are really at work now, are actually prevalent among Christians even now. For instance, “even now are there many Antichrists,” opposing Him and attempting to take His place. Even now the world is the same as it will be then, at His appearing; only its wickedness and hostility to Him are as yet more dissembled. Therefore, whenever we are tempted to be led away to complicity with evil now, and notably into any unholy commixture of believers and unbelievers—of any leaning by the Church upon the world that murdered her Lord, or of any the least surrender or compromise of divine principles, for the sake of accession of numbers, or indeed for any reason—then we can behold here how that evil will end, when He “who now hinders” by His presence its full developement, has departed, and when the Church with Him has gone! In like manner, the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, in the preceding dispensation, was only the due close and climax of evil that had been for ages before perpetrated and plausibly defended. The rejection, and oftentimes the murder of God’s prophets then, one after

another, was persistently defended by those who knew not God, however pious they were, in those times. And so the final issue of such a tendency is beheld at last in the Son of God being slain by those who sat in Moses' seat. THUS the enormity of its religious wickedness all along is judged. Now things are somewhat changed. Now the tendency is not merely to the rejection of the true; but IN ADDITION, to the reception with delight of the false. Hence the final rejection of the name of Christ, with the imminent worship of the beast to be set up by the Antichrist, and also the determined opposition to everything of Christ's—all this is preparing, yea, struggling for full developement even now. The Book of the Revelation shows us the workings of these evils when at their height. Thus may those who fear God be made spiritually sensitive to distinguish between good and evil, between plausibilities and realities, between names and verities, and not seek to mock a holy God, because He is slow to execute judgment.

Imagine a line drawn across a sheet of paper, faintly coloured at first, but towards the end the colour more preceptible, until it is quite easily perceived. So does God here show us the evils now denied to exist, yet loved and gloried in by most professors: He shows them, and what they lead to, and how they will be judged by Him when they are ripe and come

to the fall. So may we now fear to disobey ! This Book of the Revelation, or book of divine judgment, throughout the seals, trumpets and vials, alludes very evidently to the plagues that came down of yore on Egypt, as recorded in Exodus. But, as then, the main feature in God's battle with Egypt was His judgment on her gods ; so, similarly, on the religion and living hero-gods of Christendom, is His wrath poured out in the Revelation.

But the true Church of God will be out of all this. He who denies this—whatever musty learning he may bring to bear on the interpretation of this book,—such an one understands it not at all. He has yet to learn the first rudiments as to its teaching ! He reverses the principle distinctly enunciated by the Lord in Matt. xi. 25. He assumes that God hides things from His babes, and reveals them to the wise and to the prudent. To quote what Gibbon and other infidels write, as proof of the fulfilment of the Revelation, is not only assuming that Christ receives testimony from men, which He Himself distinctly denies (John v. 34), but is also bringing demons to vouch for His truth ; the very thing which is what He over and over again refused to accept. (Mark i. 25, 34 ; Acts xvi. 17.) As the Roman Catholics require that to interpret Scripture, you must be well read in the so-called fathers ; so also do Protestant divines maintain that

to understand the Revelation, you must be conversant with innumerable writers and authorities, and have the panorama of the past eighteen centuries all clear before your mind. With such men Scripture is not its own and best testimony; it requires other authority to back it. But particularly all this line of things utterly denies the Church's true position and call. It treats her as if she were to be looking up at what is coming down, which indeed is Israel's prospect; instead of looking down, aye, and coming down with Christ Himself at His return. Yet this is what invariably, in the New Testament, is represented as our place.* And likewise throughout this Revelation there is not a chapter wherein it is not taken for granted that the church has already been removed from the scene, and is already with her Lord, when the judgments in detail are in process of execution. Thus:—

In chap. i., the church's song of triumph and Israel's wail of grief, and the full exposure of Christendom's idolatry by Him whose title is the First and the Last: such are succinctly mentioned at once as the three great consequences in their due order of His Advent. True, indeed, His Bride even now sings, but as yet it is by faith and in the midst of tears. (Matt. ix. 15.) She shall, however, soon sing, so as never yet she has sung; but as to the period when first she shall be in full song, see chapters iv. and v.

* See Lincoln's Leaflets, First Series, No. 6.

In chap. ii., in the fourth picture of the church's decadence, (Thyatira,) a remnant are quite railed off from the great professing body, and they are encouraged to hold out enduringly till their Lord arrives. To those thus overcoming is given the promise of the morning Star. Surely at once this is something widely different from Israel's hope of the rising of the Sun. Thus does this wonderful book commence at a period of the second coming of the Lord obviously earlier than that to which Israel's eye is pointed, (Malachi iv.) And by the Lord's return to this identical symbol in His parting words (xxii.) He affords us demonstration that He means exactly what He says. But do all see the morning Star? or do watchers only?

In chap. iii. is found His distinct guarantee, that those who are keeping the word of His patience He will keep from the coming hour of temptation: not only from the trial itself, but also from "the hour" thereof. This certainly involves their previous removal from this earthly scene altogether. Accordingly—

In chapters iv. and v., there, sure enough, we behold the church represented by the twenty-four elders enthroned in heaven: at once, ere a single sound of judgment is heard. These two chapters are admirably in their place, according to the church's hope of being caught away to the presence of the Lord at any moment, and certainly anterior to the plagues of the last days. Here, we

see everything to be perfectly settled in heaven, and the heavenly saints all in the glory with their Lord, ere the world or its sins appear to be remembered at all. In iv., where the throne of God appears to be dressing itself for a judgment, which shall be so universal as to reach to the confines of creation, these are represented as calmly sitting, at such a time, as if nothing thereof could reach up to them. Again in v., where Christ receives the formal investiture of the kingdom from the hands of God, these are heard instantly to sing, now "we shall reign." Thus the plan of the book assumes the presence in heaven of the church of God, as ITS STARTING POINT. Besides which, observe exactly what they are looking forward to—not to their Lord coming to fetch them. That action is past. The first thing before them then is not identical with the first thing which is yet before us. And why? Because when chapter v. is enacted, His great promise in John xiv. 3 will have been fulfilled. It is most clear that these elders are not in chap. v., that is, at the beginning of this book, present only by anticipation; for they are beheld in active service; nor yet again are they dead saints, believers not in the body; for in chap. vi. some of this class (but slain after the church's rapture) are perfectly contradistinguished from these elders.

Chap. vi. Let any one read of such departed souls as those in vi. 9—11, and then compare what had been previously stated in v., of the blessedness of

those who had kept the word of Christ's patience, and the utter dissimilarity of the two classes is evident. And these here cry for vengeance, as is often the case in the Psalms, and thus their Jewish spirit must be admitted. For such a cry as in verse 10, is not the cry of Christians.

Chap. vii. Here we have a clear distinction drawn between Israel and the nations, between Jew and Gentile. So these saved ones, however exalted their blessings, cannot be a part of the church of God. For therein is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all. And when we come presently to look at this chapter more narrowly, we shall certainly admit that the portion of those here represented as coming out of the great tribulation, is vastly exceeded by the church in her glory and blessing.

Chap. viii., ix. Now we come to the "woes," first on earth, and then on men. But these woes are caused—are partly in answer to the prayers of those saints mentioned in viii. 3—5. Therefore, again we repeat, these saints are Jewish saints, calling for vengeance on their foes. The Christian's cry to the end will rather be, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But the church is nowhere in this scene.

Chap. x., xi. Here is a repetition in part of the interposition recorded in Exodus iii. and iv. Michael the great Prince, that will presently stand up for the children of Israel, gives here a commission to His

two witnesses, as He did of old to Moses and Aaron. But the entire phraseology of this section denotes that it is for an earthly people, in whose behalf He is now about to interfere. I study brevity in this preface ; and hence, can do no more than appeal to such proofs as in plenty abound. Thus as He descends, encircling His brow is seen the rainbow, the sure pledge of His covenant with the earth. If He speaks, His voice is compared to a *lion's*. Again, here is a distinct reference to the exact times and seasons of His public interference. But with these times His church has nothing whatever to do. Above all, the Lord is here represented as *STANDING*. But, verily, *throughout* the time of His rejection by Israel, and of the call of the Church into higher glory, even into the holiest of all, His is a sitting posture. Nor will He ever rise up or move till God bids Him. Or, once more, we read of His planting His foot on the earth and on the sea,—equivalent to His assertion of His claim to both of these as His own ; and in accordance herewith, we have here a significant title of His as “the Lord of the earth” (xi. 4, Greek ; compare Joshua ii. 11 and iii. 11.) This handful of specimens is ample proof as to the different atmosphere we are here breathing, to that of the church's own place.

Chap. xii.—xv. 4 is a great parenthesis. The other chapters, those detailing the sore judgments of the seals, and of the trumpets, and of the vials, narrate the process of God's hardening of his foes for the great

day of His wrath, at His Son's appearing, as in chap. xix. But these chapters in this parenthesis sketch his foes' wrath on His earthly people. Chapter xii. unfolds to us the prime agent in this great impending tribulation to be Satan, who will finally be cast down from heaven, when God's time has come for the church, as the man child, to be taken up to its heavenly home. In chapter xiii. there are God's earthly people in this awful period, and in xiv. there are the happy out-comers from the tribulation. Their preservation in faith is attributed to God, who inscribed their names in the Lamb's book of life, "FROM the foundation of the world." Such is the phrase used when it is of earthly blessing, as again in Matt. xxv. 34. But when the heavenly people's predestination is spoken of, the language then used of it is, "BEFORE the foundation of the world." (Eph. i. 4 and Titus i. 2.) So, again, the distinction between Jew and Gentile is distinctly discernible in this parenthesis. In fact the saints in xiv. are identical with those in vii. Only in vii. their salvation is shown to be secured ere the tribulation sets in; and in xiv. their salvation is celebrated after the tribulation is past.

Chap. xv. 4—xix. 8. Here the general subject of the hardening of God's foes by the judgments of the seals, of trumpets, and of vials, is resumed from chap. xi. And here the wrath of God is spoken of as without any mitigation. Under the trumpets, His judgments

descend on the "third part of the sea, and of the sun," &c. But under the vials there is no limitation whatever. Everywhere there is "blood," "blood," "blood." How passing strange that anyone should dream of the church's place as in the midst of all this dire judgment. Even if Israel is to be in it at all, it is on account of their rejection of their Messiah; but even they, though they shall be exposed to the wrath of the Beast and of Antichrist, that they may learn their folly; yet, viewing these judgments as from God on their foes, shall be sheltered in their chambers (Isa. xxvi. 20), as were their ancestors of old in the land of Goshen. (Ex. viii. 22.) Then presently their path is prepared by the drying up of the waters of the mystic Euphrates, as were the Red Sea and Jordan of old time. And though the mystic Babylon, as did Jericho formerly, bars their progress, it crumbles away before their eyes. Apostate Christendom disappears through its own corruption, so that Israel may be to the fore. Then, as the kings of Canaan withstood Joshua and Israel, so will the kings of the habitable world be gathered together against God's true, earthly Jewish people, and think to make as short work of them and of their hope in Messiah, as—the true church having been taken home—the religiousness of Christendom, the refuse left after the rapture, those kings had swept away under the sixth vial. But their Redeemer is mighty—"The Lord of Hosts is His name." So in chapter

xix., He descends to their rescue. But all this is undoubtedly Jewish prospect, and nothing else.

Chap. xix. So when He comes down, He comes down attended, as it is constantly in the epistles declared that He will do, "with all His saints." (1 Thess. iii. 18.) When He appears, "we appear with Him in glory." (Col. iii.) If it is suggested that those here in His company are ordinary angels, the reply is, that in xvii. 14, where Christ's conflict with the beast is glanced at, it is added, that those then with the Lord are "called, and chosen, and faithful." We do read of the elect angels; but not of their being "called and faithful." Such terms apply only to those who lived on earth, ere they were called with a heavenly calling, and who had been more or less "faithful" to that call. Besides which, there need be no doubt that those spoken of as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in the earlier part of this chapter, are identical with the "armies in heaven that followed Him" at His descent. For the fact is, the church is to be like Christ. She takes her cue from Him. Up there He is a Bridegroom. She is His bride. When He comes down, He is a warrior. Then is His church His army. And thus again, all is certainly settled in heaven, ~~ERE~~ earth is interfered with at all.

In chap. xx. the church is enthroned, and perfectly distinguished in verse 4 from the very first sufferers after the rapture, even those before the great

tribulation, I mean those under the fifth seal. These are described here as those who were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God." Then the sufferers in the great tribulation, who come out victorious, are distinguished from both these classes, as those who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, etc. Hence, here are three classes: the enthroned church, as in iv. and v., and then two others, suffering, first one class, and then the other; but each subsequent to the lifting up of the church to her heavenly home.

In chap. xxi., the symbol is changed; wherefore we shall see, in the course of the exposition; and the church is characterised as the New Jerusalem, and the saved nations as walking in its light, and refreshed and blessed by its genial influence. In other words, again, the one is a heavenly, and the other is an earthly prospect. Let us keep them distinct. This we must do, if we would understand Scripture. The distinction between the heavenly and earthly realms of God, obtains in Genesis i.; and throughout the Word the same is maintained. Though of both realms Christ is to be the Head. (Eph. i. 10.) "The glory of the celestial is one; the glory of the terrestrial is another."

Lastly, in chap. xxii. the Lord presents Himself to Israel as the Root and Offspring of David. But that nation, unready for Him, replies not. Then to the church He presents Himself as the bright and

the morning Star. And she, forthwith, accepting the hint (see chap. ii.) in that precious and beautiful symbol, joyfully responds; yea, and the Spirit with her identifies Himself with her cry, "Come." Thus the contrast to the close of the Old Testament is perfect. There Christ is the Sun of Righteousness: here He is the Morning Star. There He is that which is seen by all; here He is that which is only seen by a few, who watch in the cold, dark night. There there is no response of invitation by Israel; here the church's gladsome word is heard at once. Then, lastly, He ceasing from symbol, again whispers, "I come quickly:" and she again replies, "Come, Lord Jesus." May we each, therefore, hereby learn our place and true attitude, and look for nothing, absolutely nothing, ere He comes: but be on the watch for our coming Lord. As for him that places aught, it matters little what that aught is, whether death, or the Jews' return to Palestine, or the tribulation, or whatever it be, either in his scheme of prophetic interpretation, or as certainly to take place before his Lord's return—he understands nothing of what he affirms. All his learning must be unlearned, and he must begin again. He must begin with Christ, not only as His Saviour, but as his Hope; for Christ is First. Christian reader! hold to your Hope firmly. The Lord is at hand. He may come AT ANY MOMENT. Do you really believe this?

LECTURE II.

CHAPTER I.—THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

“**T**HE Revelation of Jesus Christ!” Such is God’s own title to this wonderful book. The uninspired heading of this book is not true. It is not “the Revelation of St. John the divine.” That beloved disciple, indeed, wrote this book, by the Lord’s instruction; but that is all. This is the book of the unveiling of Jesus Christ! I mean that the word *apocalypse* is in reference to a *person*. That person here is the Son of God Himself.* The book is not the Revelations (i.e., in the plural), as if there were or could be several unveilings of this glorious Personage. No! He has been seen once in weakness, in shame, and in suffering; He shall be seen once more in power, and majesty, and glory. When He came before, His glory was hidden: at His return

* A few specimens of the use of this word *αποκαλυψις* in other places of Scripture are here cited that the reader may perceive its force. Rom. viii. 19. 1 Cor. i. 7. Gal. i. 12. 2 Thess. i. 7, 1 Peter i. 7 and 13. 1 Peter iv. 13.

it will be in unveiled splendour, and in process of time, all of it. And as soon as ever He is present here again, even ere He is seen by the world at all, His church shall behold Him in all His uncreated and divine Majesty. "We shall see Him as He is." This will be, as it were, the first moment of the future eternity. In that which is past, the creature has been tried and exposed; or, in remoter periods still, God was alone and unknown. The only begotten Son alone was with Him, the embosomed One. (Prov. viii. 23.) But in the ages to come God shall be seen—yea, much more, seen as *God*, and known and lived upon. Often and often had He been seen by patriarchs of old, and by angels in heaven (Job i.); but nowhere is it stated in Scripture that He has ever yet been seen "as He is." Or how could He, ere Christ displayed Him, be fully seen? For Christ is the only manifestation of God. On the cross He is seen in fulness of grace to sinners; on the throne now, in fulness of glory for believers. Only so does He manifest God. Otherwise, the glory of God, that is to say, what God is indeed and in truth, all this is unknown at present; save to the eye of faith, Christ is "hid" in God. (Col. iii.) And at His second coming, the first of all creation to gaze upon Him in His full unclouded splendour, will be the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are enrolled in heaven. Such will be the transforming efficacy of that beati-

fic sight, that we shall be like Him. "FOR we shall see Him as He is." The one only glorious difference between Himself and us, will ever and must ever be, that He will be the Blessor, and we the blest: He the Giver, and we the receivers: He the Fountain, and we the vessels: He the uncreated Light, yea, and with His Father, the very source itself of Life and Glory, and we as precious stones on which that divine effulgence is poured out.* So will all this be showed out on us, that what He is may be learnt by others, through beholding God's kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. To creation and to the world that glory will be uncovered by successive unfoldings; at the beginning of the millenium in one stage; at its close still more fully. Nor can I omit to mention, that when it is stated in Rev. xx. 12, that the wicked dead shall "stand before God," all the best manuscripts have the correcter reading—"before the throne"; as if the sight of the Being Himself, in all His beauty, were too good and too much for them. As a promise to certain, rather than as an inevitable necessity to all, is it recorded, "Blessed

* Even the above is scarcely all the truth. For the church, though necessarily first a receiver, is, secondly, a giver. (John vii. 38.) We are to inherit the dispensing of blessing, *ευλογιαν*. (1 Peter iii. 9.) And hence, in Rev. xxi., the church's light is seen to be crystallizing, *κρυσταλλιζοντι*, that is, beautifying and beatifying creation.

are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God : " that is, *as God*.

But wherever He is, this wonderful people, this beloved church, shall be with Him, and abide in His unveiled presence. Even as you never read of the cherubim of old, without some indication of the presence of God too. So with the cherubim of the future ; the living temple of the living God, full of and glowing with the one Spirit of that God ; whilst within that church, within those cherubim, within that magnificent Temple, will He ever abide. Hence, when He appears to the world, He will not be seen as erst on the cross in shame ; or as in Jerusalem of old, alone ; but His blood-bought church in the same glory with Himself. Oh ! what a sight.

But this book is the book of Judgment. Hence the frequency with which the word Almighty is found herein ; whereas in all the rest of the New Testament it occurs but once. For presently divine power, in conjunction with divine wisdom (iv. 6), shall be put forth to make a clean sweep of all ungodliness from the face of the earth. So in God's dealings in grace with us now, after reading in Ephesians i. of " His will," " His grace," " His glory," " His good pleasure," last of all we read of " His power," in verse 19.

The book is not occupied with the eternal state. The first few verses of chap. xxi. are all that touch upon this period. No : nor even does it descant at

large upon the millennial reign of Christ. Its subject is rather the mode in which His kingdom shall be introduced and set up. Specially its chapters treat of the awful interval down here between the rapture of the true church to His immediate presence, and thus His disavowal and rejection of the nominal professing body of Christendom, on the one hand ; and of His appearing in glory with His saints, on the other. Hence we find that the interval is used on the part of God in the hardening of the hearts of His foes, and in the allowing of His ancient people to encounter terrible trouble, in order that these may have a little taste of the manner of the king that they have desired in preference to His Anointed. Thus shall they be led to long for the interposition, and for the sway of their rejected but rightful and holy Sovereign.

This book, given by God through Christ to His servants, is to instruct them as to what He is going to do. He places them behind the scenes, or rather in His own light, that they may learn His own pure judgment of the state of things in the world in which they are for a while continued, to testify for Him. Thus by perceiving how densely dark with corruption and apostasy, everything around them is, so that God's heavy hand of judgment must (chap. i., iv., xxii., &c. thrice "must") come down, such may be strengthened for true and enduring service, whilst yet their Lord tarries.

That man, therefore, is truly a favoured man, who in his heart hears the words of this prophecy. Such an one may not understand everything contained herein. Not a word is said about this. What is required is the opened ear, so that he who has it "keeps" what is here written. God gives not to us His judgment of the scene everywhere around us, in order to puff us up with pride; but that we may keep our own garments unspotted from the defilements around, and overcome in the day of battle. This admonition to "hear" we have at the very beginning, and again at the very close of this prophecy. (xxii. 17). So let us carry with us, throughout our meditations on this book, the divine explanation of what the profitable hearing of this prophecy is. (See verse 3). And may we add from Genesis xviii., that if the Lord reveals to us His impending wrath against a Sodom guiltier far than that from which Abraham of old was separated, it is on purpose that we may pray for those righteous men who are yet entangled therein.

In verse 2 we are instructed as to the divisions of this book. These are two: the Word of God, i.e., as to the future of this world, from chap. iv. to xxii; and Jesus Christ's testimony of the present condition of things in the churches that He left to witness for Him. The first three chapters, therefore, portray the apostasy of the professing Christendom all around

us: the last nineteen chapters reveal the way of God, in righteously taking vengeance thereon. The first three chapters suggest the cause—ecclesiastical abominations: the remaining chapters, at least to xx., disclose the dire and fatal consequences.

Then again, this first part, this testimony of Jesus Christ, is in two sections. The former exhibits the Lord in His personal inspection of the churches to the end of chapter i. The other two chapters (ii. and iii.) are His own recorded statements of the results of that inspection. In chapter i. He is beheld down here as if still, like as of old, He were unwilling to believe the cry as to the sin that had come up into His ears. (See Gen. xviii. 20; xi. 5.) In chapters ii. and iii. He traces, in seven successive panoramic scenes, the entire decadence of the professing body, from its first decline onward and downward to Laodicean indifferentism, and announces, as if with tears, His imminent rejection, with utter loathing, of the whole corrupt thing.

Once more, this very first section, that is to say, chap. i., contains two sub-divisions. First, we have here the Revelation of Jesus Christ, put generally in its relation to His true people, then to Israel, and last to Christendom. Then from verse 9 onwards, we have a symbolic vision of the Son of Man, with His eyes of flame, walking amid the churches.

The subject opens with the usual salutation of grace and peace. But God is not here spoken of as

in the Pauline epistles. Even in the church's song, He is not called "Our Father," but "His," i.e., Christ's "Father." The expression, "He who is, and who was, and who is to come," corresponds substantially to His name Jehovah. The Holy Ghost is spoken of as in Isa. xi., and also not as sent down from heaven, but as "before His throne." Jesus Christ is represented as the faithful witness, in contrasted allusion to the professing church's unfaithfulness, (iii. 14,) and so as about to supersede her. His title, Firstborn out of the dead ones, glances at His true people's hope, viz: Resurrection, or its equivalent change at His coming; whilst His other name here, Prince of the kings of the earth, reminds us that He must reign in order to put down all insubjection.

Next follows a reference to the three great classes themselves, *seriatim*. The unveiling of Jesus Christ will produce, we here learn, on the part of the church, a rapturous song of praise. "Unto Him who loves (*ἀγαπᾷ*) us, and washed, (or as some read, *λυσᾷ*, "loosed") us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This song appears to contemplate, for the moment, the church's rapture as then past. They who are to sing, risen all, and He unveiled, are before each other. No wonder, therefore, at the ardour of their worship, or at their

reference to their own position in His kingdom. But Israel's action in connection with Messiah's advent, as depicted in verse 7, is strikingly different. That nation then looks up at Him coming down, and "all the tribes of the land" weep with grief that erst they had rejected and crucified Him. This very action of this Jewish people, both the Lord Himself, in Matt. xxiv. 30, and the prophet Zechariah, (xii. 10,) had long ago predicted.

But whilst the church at His coming will sing, and Israel's heart will relent towards Him, apostate Christendom is silent. For why? Thereby the grossness of her idolatry is bared. Hence here, the Lord is speaking of Himself as the Alpha and the Omega, the force of which comparison will be felt if Isaiah chaps. xl. to xlviii. be recalled to mind. For there the Lord, in His denial that He knows any other god than Himself, again and again speaks of Himself in similar language. See, for instance, Isa. xliii. 10. The purport of these words here, therefore, is unmistakeable. Christendom has loved and gloried in, and been gathered unto many other names than His name. The vanity of them all, when He appears, will be at once evident. Hence occurs now, for the first time in this book of judgment, and in the clause where the name of God cited is in exposure of Christendom's idolatry, the ominous word, "Almighty." Clearly it is hinted thus, that condign vengeance is the portion of her cup. Warned of her sin, specially

in these last years, she had often been ; but her hero-gods she had loved. And now, at length, He speaks out, aye, and shines out. And as Capernaum's guilt and doom were more awful than Sodom's ; so Christendom's sins are more heinous still. So, as Capernaum was to be thrust down with divine impetus to hell, (Matt. xi. 28) ; Christendom, too, or as God calls it, Babylon, shall perish in like manner. (See Rev. xviii. 21.)* It is well to add here that the

* The above three classes, sorted as they are by the unveiling of Jesus Christ, to wit, the triumphant church, the weeping Israel, and the idolatrous, silent and self-condemned Christendom, may be severally alluded to in the names of God in ver. 4—6. Thus the clause, " Who is, and who was, and who is to come," may be a look out at Christendom's false gods. This seems more probable from the repetition of this very phrase in the 8th verse, where God is certainly judging, as I have proved above, the religious world's attachment to the little antichrists. So next, the reference to the seven spirits before the throne, may suggest Israel's future blessing. Whilst certainly the mention of the name of Jesus Christ causes the ardour of the church's love to break out in rapturous song.

So, again, the three titles of Christ may be similarly paralleled. " The faithful Witness " is undoubtedly in contrast to the professing body's unfaithfulness, (Rev. iii. 14). " The first-born from the dead " reminds His true church of their own hope. And, thirdly, " The Prince of the kings of the earth " may look at Israel's future glory, of being the first nation of the world under their King Messiah. Anyhow, the three classes themselves, and their several attitudes at His unveiling, are perfectly distinct in ver. 5—8.

repetition of the clause, "I am Alpha and Omega" (v. 11,) is certainly spurious, and is not to be found in any ancient manuscript of this book. This I say, lest otherwise the argument drawn from the words in verse 8 might not appear so forcible.

And this leads me to look now at the other subdivision of our chapter, namely, the vision of the Son of Man in His personal inspection of the seven churches, which seven churches represent, as we shall in due course perceive, Christendom in her entire career from first to last, of departure from Himself. For in the arrangement in the previous section of all into three classes, in view of the revelation of Jesus Christ, it had been implied, as we have seen, that Christendom was in full apostasy. Hence, therefore, here we find that He has come down as if to see for Himself the state of things prevailing.

John is in tribulation at Patmos, an islet of the Egean sea. But nothing can keep the Lord from His people. He who was with Paul in a dungeon, is now with His beloved disciple in this barren spot. So whilst in the Spirit, on some Lord's-day, suddenly he hears a loud voice from behind him, which thus abruptly accosts him: "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches." He turns round to see the speaker. Then his eyes behold a symbolic vision. He sees seven candlesticks of gold, and in their midst, the Son of Man.

robed in high-priestly dress, though radiant with divine effulgence. He, overpowered with the glory of that sight, prostrates himself with fear; but, recovered by the touch of his Lord and His reassuring words, is directed to write an account of Christ's inspection of the churches, according as he had witnessed it, and to send it unto them, together with the results of that omniscient inspection, as recorded in the seven epistles of chapters ii. and iii.

Here one is at once struck with a suggestive variation from the types of old. Then there was a single candlestick, with its six branches around the centre stem, (Exodus xxv. 31, 32); now are beheld by the seer seven several candlesticks. Then the bond of union was visible in that centre stem: now the bond between the seven churches is quite as real; but is *an invisible one*, viz., Jesus Himself. It is He who is seen in the midst, which, as the reader knows, is His due and proper and constant place in the church. So would He, if we would have it so, group us all around Himself, as a hen doth gather her chickens. See His place in grace now, (Matt. xviii. 20), and again in glory presently, (Heb. ii. 12). Thus here, and as everywhere, it is implied that our true centre ground of gathering is our risen Lord Jesus Christ. See Matt. xxvi. 31, 32, where first we have the Shepherd smitten and the sheep scattered; and next, the Shepherd risen and the

sheep gathering to *Him*. But how wonderful that all who profess His name are not satisfied with Himself. And here, in this instructive symbol, we see that He is not only the Rock for individuals to rest on ; but also the single, sole-sufficient Centre to connect and unite many assemblies into one. To the eye of sense such various gatherigs may appear separated, because the Lord, the living link between them, is not seen. So, too, might anyone, looking at different sunbeams, imagine such were wholly unconnected with each other ; unless indeed yon bright orb of day, from which they all radiated and to which they all belonged, were seen also. In like manner does faith approve His way, being satisfied with Himself.*

* I anticipate here an objection. If, one may say, the above is the only true mode of union, viz., in Christ by the Holy Ghost, how will this sort of union lead the world to believe, as Jesus prayed in John xvii. For this sort of union certainly the world cannot see. I might answer with Bellett, that the union in John xvii. refers not to any ecclesiastical confederacy at all ; but to something far more real and true. Secondly, the world can see the *effect*, though not the *cause* ; it can see our love in the truth to each other, and our gravitating unto each other, by OUR beholding of Christ in each other. But, thirdly and specially, it is not so well known as it ought to be, that the word "one," just before the mention of the world believing, is an interpolation. It is absent from the manuscripts B. C. D., that is, from the Vatican MS., from the Ephraim MS., and from Bezas. It is found indeed in the Alexandrine MS., and in the Sinai. But the Alexandrine MS. is admitted to be most incor-

But the assemblies quickly got away from Him. Their first love cooled. Nicolaitanism, or clerisy, was the prominent symptom at the commencement of the apostasy; Laodiceanism, that is, ecclesiastical

rect in the Gospels. The meaning is obscured by the insertion of that second "one." Lachman and Tischendorf and Alford reject it. The passage, I am convinced, should be arranged thus—

Prayer for ULTIMATE object:—"That they all may be one."

Prayer for PRESENT stage of accomplishment. } "As Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also MAY BE IN US, that the world may believe," etc.

Then, finally, the ULTIMATE end in glory. } "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know," etc.

Thus Christ's prayer for us now is, that "we may be IN GOD, that the world may believe"; and that we may ultimately be PERFECTED INTO ONE, that the world may know," etc. Such is the force, too, of the preposition *etc.*, which (as Mr. W. H. Darby, to whom I have submitted this interpretation, suggests) denotes drift, or tendency. We are in God now—this is God's *present* work, for which Christ prays for to be the case now; and this is being answered now. (See 1 John iv. 16.) Then the oneness shall be fully seen in glory by and by. That is to say, God's present work in us, is a preparation for His future object. The church is in process of formation. (See Eph. ii. 21, 22, Greek.) Therefore the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, to whom God is making known, now, by the church, His manifold wisdom. (iii. 10.) Also note that John xvii. 21, is in part expounded in 1 John i. 3.

Democracy, marks its close. But it little matters, if the evil be indeed within, as to what results first follow. Departure from the Lord Jesus, as the sole centre and life of His church, must entail the direst consequences. Therefore, the Lord is here beheld in the midst of the candlesticks, as Son of Man judging, *by that very position* of His, the evil at its secret source—at its root commencement. The term, Son of Man, is in special reference to Daniel vii.

When the seer, too, speaks of His head and hairs as white like wool, as white as snow, it is evidently in reference to the Ancient of Days in continued allusion to Daniel vii. And thus these two pictures of Son of Man and of Ancient of Days are seen to meet in Christ our Lord. Roman Catholics have, indeed, a print of God the Father as a very old man at the beginning of their bibles. I suppose that their thought is of the scene in Daniel vii. Many protestants, too, are in this matter not much wiser. Such forget that no one hath seen God (*θεος* without the article, Deity) at any time: that the only begotten Son is the sole way of our seeing God. With regard to the account in the prophet, it should be borne in mind that the vision is a symbolic representation, and also that Daniel abounds in double symbols. Thus Daniel ii. is another sketch of much the same as Daniel vii. And here, in our present chapter, we have distinct and inspired authority for

the assertion that both these symbolic truths converge in Christ.

His eyes are as flame; but His garment is the priestly ephod, and He is represented as girt about the paps (*μαστοις*) with a golden girdle.* The word rendered "paps" properly denotes a woman's breasts. It is not the same word as is used of the breasts of the angels executing wrath in xv. 6. There it is *στηθη*, men's breasts. Do what we have here taught us of His eyes and of His breast, combinedly indicate that truth and love, righteousness and mercy, He will alike and equally display?

His feet, in judgment of evil on the earth, resemble fine brass, or rather, white hot copper, (see Ezekiel i. 4—7.) His voice is as the voice of the Almighty, as the sound of many waters, (Ezekiel xliii. 2), which men shall be compelled to listen to, unless they incline their ears to hear the still voice of His Spirit now—encouraging them to overcome, that is, to come out from complicity with sin. In His right hand are beheld seven stars, to indicate, that if the church, as seven candlesticks, give light on earth, heaven, i.e., Himself is the source of that light. (Ephes. iv. 11.) Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, and His countenance, not as Paul beheld, a light ABOVE the

* See Lincoln's Leaflets, No. 1, for an explanation of the Ephod and Girdle.

brightness of the sun, (Acts xxvi. 18); but was now as the sun shineth in his strength. In short, all is judgment, according to the Word of God, pure and divine.

The sight of that vision terrifies John, as Daniel had been terrified before. Sinners may be bold now; but not when He deals with them. Oh, if he became as dead who knew Christ so well; and had leaned on His bosom, what of those who know Him not at all? Thus we see that the flesh, in the very best of us, is irreclaimable. Bondage and fear are its concomitants. We must be "changed," and this mortal must put on immortality, ere we shall feel quite at home in the liberty of the glory (*την ελευθεριαν της δοξης*) of the children of God.

But I beg the reader to observe the ground of Christ's reassurance. The Lord reminds His disciple not of his intimacy with Himself in the days of His flesh, for that had been of little avail to us. Our hearts would not thereby have been established. No. Our ability to face Him in glory rests not upon any special favour extended to us individually. Our foundation-standing—our highest ground, is our common ground—our title, as Christ here reminds John, is Himself—is His death and resurrection: "I am the living One; I became dead, and behold I am alive for evermore. And I have the keys of the unseen world and the grave;"—for conquerors, when they

captured a fortress, had the keys surrendered unto them. So Christ is Victor over death and hell, and everything that was against us. He lives—our life. How perfect this our ground of peace is, is evident in that the disciple is instantly composed again, and requires, not as did Daniel (chap. x.), to be comforted seven times. Nor do we ever read of John's trembling again. Wondrous, awful visions did he behold, even the great white throne itself (xxi. 11); but he never trembled again. Let us, therefore, understand how perfect must be our peace, if Christ in resurrection be that peace; for John clearly here is a representative man. His title is identical with mine. For me, too, Jesus lives—for me He too won the day. Hallelujah.

LECTURE III.

CHRIST'S OWN INSPECTION AND JUDGMENT OF CHRISTENDOM.

JUDGMENT! Judgment of the churches, or of the entire professing church in the seven stages of her decline! Judgment by the Lord Jesus, with His eyes of flame! Judgment by His very attitude, as we have shown on chapter i., of walking in the midst of the seven, as being Himself the sole Centre and Life of His church. For thus the evil, the apostasy at its germ in secret, is measured. In the midst is His position in grace. But if men will not have Him in grace, pressing them to His bosom, and grouping them and the assemblies immediately and closely round Himself, here we see He changes not. Then that same position of His becomes the test as to how far they have got away from Him, measuring the distance. The nearer they are to Him and to His Word, the more will they be as one: the further they are from Him, the more will they appear as seven. It is He who is the Link, the Centre Stem—He alone. In the event of actual departure from Himself and from His Word, all confederation or

affiliation of these seven,* or of any others, resembles, in the vain attempt to hide the sin and shame, the fig-leaf covering of Adam. Christ's walking among these seven itself augurs both that His rest has been in a sense disturbed, and that there is actual distance between one of these churches and another—that they are not so one,—one I mean, through abiding closeness to Himself, as He had placed them. They have got away from *Him*! To begin with joining themselves together without returning unto Him, would indeed be a wiping of the mouth and saying, “We have done and are in no wickedness.” (See Jer. iv. 1.) Independency is widely removed from the divine order for the churches: but better confession of failure, than mere organised hiding of it. If we would return from our iniquities, let our dependence again be *first* upon the Lord, and so, and so only, on each other. This, as this symbolic candlestick proves, is God's way.

The word angel is ominous here. How blinded men must be to quote a term like this in defence either of modern episcopacy, or of the dissenting pastor. Yet Peter, who abounds in contrasted allusions to the

* Having written a work of six hundred pages, mainly on the prophetic aspects of these seven churches in these chapters, I need not extend my remarks to any length here. Here my object need only be to present a concise epitome of what probably most readers will have already found there.

apostasy, had written that believers were “now brought back (επιστραφητε) to THE Shepherd, or Pastor and Bishop of their souls.” But this term, angel, used in the address to each church, reveals that Christendom has got away from Himself. Only to think of Paul writing to the angel, or messenger, of an assembly! Impossible! You never send a message, or employ a messenger, to get the ear of one who is before you—close to you. You may give to such an one, or to an assembly in such a case, written instructions; but to behave as if that one, or that assembly, is at a distance, is suggestive. But thus does Christ here, and thus does He at once indicate the core of the apostasy. Ah, it is easy to talk of union to Christ by the Holy Ghost present with us; but with whom is this a fact? The mass of professors desire Him not. Man is ready enough to receive his fellow man in the place of God; but he is not ready to receive God Himself, or to delight himself in His presence. Thus altogether, the scene here has some startling similarities to that recorded in Genesis iii. 7, 8.

Thus there is departure from Christ, and from His plain Word, indicated at the very commencement here. Never let it be forgotten, that this panorama of Church history during eighteen centuries, starts from a first decline. For then who that knows aught of sin, of man, or of God, but will readily comprehend that the successive pictures of the Church's varying

aspects, will become only darker and darker unto the very end. A little revival unto His own the Lord may in grace vouchsafe; and these will then be recalled to Himself and to obedience. But the thing itself, the lump, the mass of that which persists to call itself the church—Christendom, as if it still were much the same as in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles—this can only wax worse and worse, more filthy, more whorish and idolatrous, until He can bear with it no longer; but turns from it with utter loathing and disgust.

But before we go further, it will be advisable, for the sake of those readers, to whom the view of these seven epistles being strung together by prophetic continuity may be a new one, just to offer at once half a dozen proofs of this, and in as few words as possible. Of course these very seven churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, &c., had an historical existence. But then how came it to pass that the Lord should select these seven, except that by the allusions He should make to the state of these, He should sketch, in continuous outline from first to last, the entire course of Christendom in decadence unto complete apostasy? Other assemblies many, and of far more importance, as Rome, Alexandria, Tralles, &c., existed. Others, too, yea probably all, had evils within them too, and godly souls therewith contending. Why then were these so specially singled out for His inspection and

judgment? Besides which, it must be borne in mind that the rest of the book of the Revelation—that is, the book of His judgments descending on Christendom, and even of the world itself turning away in scorn from this filthy and corrupting whore, (xvii. 2, xviii. 3, xix. 2,)—will be easily and largely shown to be all in consequence of that which in these two chapters is here condemned by the Lord; so that the other part of this book stands in relation to this part, as effect stands to cause. But were these seven churches so particularly sinful beyond all other churches in the world, both then and since, as that such awful and permanent results should ensue on their sole disobedience? The proof that such is not the fact; but that these seven were representative assemblies of the entire professing body, in the seven stages of its decline—the conviction of this will most fully force itself on the mind, as the details of each, in prophetic sketch, are severally studied in their place. But even now we may say:—

1. The number seven is not without significance. There were many other assemblies, yea, many even in the immediate neighbourhood of these. Then why these only?

2. There is some “mystery” enshrined in these judicial sketches, as Christ Himself avouches. Any interpretation of these epistles, therefore, which ignores this “mystery,” cannot possibly be the correct one.

Then, wherein does the "mystery" consist? If all the language here is only of that didactic and hortatory sort, as is found, for instance, in Romans or Philip-pians, what of "mystery" have we herein? Or what is there here whispered so softly, as that only the "hearing ear" can catch the sound? Yet this we are warned is here required. What have we so very urgent, as that the Spirit should seven times over call our special attention to these two chapters; as if He would in this way underline each word in these epistles with seven strokes? On the hypothesis, that in these seven epistles you have the judgment of the omniscient One, as to each successive phase in the church's career, as to each step in her downward path—each downward step defended and gloried in by multitudes of professors; then you get light from the divine throne, and the Lord's own verdict on each successive developement of the apostasy. Then the urgency of the Spirit is fully accounted for. But reject this view, and then nine tenths of the instruction in these epistles you must reject too.

8. Again: each of the entire seven epistles fits admirably, without any forcing, into just the very place it should have, if the entire panorama be accepted as prophetic. Then each one is found to represent and fit with inimitable exactness, if only its language and its scriptural allusions be understood, to that very period of decline, to that very stage in the apostasy,

which the case would require. But can all this be accidental ?

4. Much that is found in these epistles would be scarcely, if at all, intelligible, unless interpreted in this way of continuous prophecy of the church's downward path. Thus, for instance, these Nicolaitanes, who are twice here so fearfully stigmatised—who are they ? No such a sect ever existed, as Archbishop Trench acknowledges. Again, this candid writer confesses his inability, as others had been compelled to do before him, to solve the difficulty as to why the warning, “ He that hath an ear,” etc., precedes the promise in the first four epistles ; but succeeds it in the last three.* I venture to assert, that unless these epistles be viewed as suggested, the difficulty is insoluble. But look at these epistles in the way contended for, and all is perfectly plain.

5. The evil, as we proceed from one epistle to the next, goes on increasing unto full apostasy. In the first epistle we have indicated precisely those two incipient stages of the mischief, which are necessarily

* “ Is there any meaning in this change of place. It is difficult to believe that there is not. The Apocalypse is a work of such consummate art, a device of such profound wisdom, that one is slow to assume anything accidental in it, any departure from a rule which has been once admitted without a meaning. At the same time I must own that I have never seen any satisfactory explanation of this.”—*Trench on the Seven Epistles*. Page 81.

the beginning of all church decline. One of these is a glance at the heart : "Thou hast left thy first love." The other refers to certain acts of bold assumption, the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. Presently I will offer some proofs that Nicolaitanism is clerisy, and nothing else. But assuming for the moment that such is the fact—and of this the writer has not had a single doubt for many years—then how startling it is that the condemnation thereof is found just here. For who that knows the place in which the divine call has put each Christian in the assembly of God on the one hand, and looks below the surface of things on the other, can deny that here, as to outward manifestation, is the germ of all subsequent ecclesiastical abominations? Again, at the other end of this prophetic chart, there is the warning, that absolute rejection of the whole thing is imminent. "I will (rather, *μελλω*, I am about to) vomit thee out of My mouth." Hence, in the first and in the last of these seven epistles, we evidently have the exact beginning and the due ending of this sinful course. So, too, in the intervening ones we have—in the second epistle, as the picture of the second stage of this decadence, the introduction of Judaism; next, in the third, a prediction couched in symbolic language, of the union of church and world, and even of church and state; in the fourth, so correct a view of Papal times, that preachers have oft hit upon this epistle to Thyatira, in their denuncia-

tions of Popery, without being at all conscious how entirely designed of God it was, to represent herein that accursed system. Then in the fifth and sixth pictures, there are beheld souls standing aloof from this state of things; in the fifth, some from the grosser evils only; and in the sixth, others getting back again to obedience to the Lord and His Word. Nevertheless, the mass are seen in these two epistles (5 and 6) to be quite as bad as ever; whilst by their persistence in their sin, in the face of the witness in these last days raised up against it, and by their loving their old darkness, and their hatred of the light, these pass into the last, or Laodicean stage, where the Lord Himself is beheld outside what, yet boasting to the very end, calls itself still His church.

What is there of all this that is not perfectly true in fact, and also in the very order here sketched too? And accordingly, from the fourth epistle inclusive there is a notable change in the action of the Lord Jesus. Up to this one, He had referred the several churches to what had been the state of things at the beginning. But henceforth, in the epistle to Thyatira, and in the subsequent ones, He points listeners forward to His second coming, as if matters now had reached that pass, that He must Himself interpose in person. Further, beginning from this identical epistle, the overcomers are quite marked off from this horrible condition in the words, "But I

say to you, the remnant (*τοις λοιποις*) " etc. And once more, still commencing with this same fourth epistle, the place of the exhortation to "hear what the Spirit saith" is changed, as if it could be no longer uttered to the entire mass, but to this remnant only; and as if there remained only for the others, not to be amended, but to be superseded. Could anything be more perfect? Surely the loop and the tache fitting here so exactly—on the one hand the directing His own now solely forward to His own return, each succeeding epistle (5, 6 and 7), moreover, referring to *His* advent with increasing vividness, and with distincter admonitions as to its nearness; and on the other, the railing off of His own from the others, and the warning being moved to a new place, as was the pillar of the cloud of old: all this, too, with the sketches preceding the fourth, tracing the way in which the leaven introduced at the outset works until the whole lump is affected and permeated therewith; and then the sketches following this fourth, revealing plainly that the wicked will still do wickedly in defiance of all testimony, and of all consequences—surely, I say, all this is too perfect a prophecy to be merely a series of coincidences; surely here is the finger of God, and the voice of Christ tracing the downward path of Christendom, commencing where Acts xx, leaves off, and continuing on and on until, all being ripe for judgment, and the saints being gathered into the garner, the vengeance

of God, so long accumulating, bursts forth at last in the woes of the seals, and trumpets, and vials.

6. Once more, the promises in these epistles are connected and continuous, as I think, in no less than three ways. For first, they glance at successive facts in Old Testament history. Promise one, as to the tree of life and Paradise, looks at Adam ere he fell ; promise two, of not being hurt by the second death, to the period when death had entered the world, as in Genesis iv. and v ; the third promise, of the hidden manna, to the book of Exodus, and to erring Israel therein ; the fourth promise, of power over the nations, to the times of the Judges, when disobedient Israel had lost that power ; the fifth promise, of priestly raiment, and unspotted, to the first book of Samuel, when the priesthood by sin so wholly broke down ; the sixth promise, of the overcomer being made a pillar in the temple of God, contrasts most blessedly, and in several ways, with what is recorded of the temple of King Solomon ; and the seventh promise, of reigning along with Christ, looks back to the epoch when Zedekiah, the last King of the Jews of old, was overcome by Nebuchadnezzar.

Secondly. In the first promise, eternal life is *imparted* by the tree of life. In the second promise, eternal life is gained, of course through grace, though yet in the way of suffering. In the third,

there is the sense of the Lord's secret favour and affection, and of the victor's full communion with Him; this certainly is an advance on life. In the fourth, there is *public* glory in the sight of men. In the fifth there is the owning of the victor by Christ before angels, and even before the Father. In the sixth the victor is contemplated as a constituent part in the system of glory itself. And in the seventh, the victor is seated with the Lord upon His throne. Thus the glory is seen to be still more and more glorious, as you pass on from one promise to the next and next.

Thirdly. These promises reveal not only **WHAT** awaits the happy victor; but also **WHEN** he shall be put into actual possession of what is promised. For the fruition of the first promise is entered upon at death, (Rev. ii. 7, with Luke xxiii. 43). The second, of the crown of life, looks onward to that time when the Lord will return, and when, consequently, life and joy will fill our hearts and gladden our faces all. The third promise, referring to an ancient Oriental practice, points to the overpowering word, "Well done," accorded to the faithful servant by Christ, from off His judgment seat. The fourth is clearly of millennial rule. The fifth may eye the time when the millennial kingdom is delivered up unto the Father. The sixth reaches on to that period, when the church, in her aspect earthwards, no longer as a camp of armed warriors, but as itself the

temple of God, itself the city, New Jerusalem, filled throughout with the immediate presence of God, and whereby creation shall be blessed and enriched, and, to use God's own word, crystallized. (Chapter xxi. 11.) The seventh sees the victor still in the same glory with Christ : for though, in one sense, the kingdom is to be delivered up to the Father, yet in another sense, it is true "of His kingdom there shall be no end." So in Daniel vii., His dominion is an everlasting dominion (ver. 14.) Then "*the saints of the high places*" (one with the Stone that smites the image) shall possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever (ver. 18.) These heavenly ones are contrasted in verse 18, with those who reign "under" the heaven, i.e., the Jewish people.

Thus, if these seven epistles represent the gloom deepening more and more into eternal midnight for the religious world, on the one hand ; they wonderfully encourage us who believe, to be on Christ's side thoroughly now, by ravishing visions of the glory ready to burst upon our gaze on the other. But now let the divine panorama itself, in its seven successive scenes, pass before us. The special features in each picture are easily to be discerned. Alongside of which, the other words contribute—very often by allusive contrast, as so many additional touches therein—to render the whole view more striking and complete.

Scene the first.—The church in Ephesus. The first stage in the decline of the church, (ii. 1—7.) Much diligence and outward zeal; but the HEART not right. First love left, yet not wholly. Ephesus means “desire,” or love. Nicolaitanism, or clerisy,* the beginning of the evil OUTWARDLY.

* Here I append a few proofs, as briefly as possible, that Nicolaitanism is clerisy. Those who desire to look into this more fully, will find this matter discussed at length in my “Javelin of Phinehas,” pages 184—197. First, then, note that the apostasy has two sides. As respects God, it is the ceasing to give the Lord His own place in the assembly of His saints, together with the ignoring of the Holy Ghost’s presence. On the human side, there is, instead, the leaning on some gifted individual, and ultimately the railing off of a caste, originally of such individuals, to conduct the worship, etc. These are precisely the two features which are placed in the picture side by side.

2. There never was a sect of the Nicolaitanes. All sorts of old tomes have been searched to discover some traces of its existence; but in vain. This Archbishop Trench admits. Suppose that there had been! Why should the Lord so pointedly single out this one, and condemn it so severely, not once, but twice, when of influential and pestilential sects there were, by the end of the first century, at least a dozen? Why should this one get ALL the blame? And what “mystery” have we herein? Behold the source of the mistake. Men have assumed this sect’s existence; then fancied it had its origin from some Nicolas, and then the very Nicolas has been identified—all in imagination.

3. Here is a word clearly of vast, though mysterious signifi-

Scene the second.—The church in Smyrna. The second stage in the church's decline. (ii. 8-11.) Judaism, or Judaised Christianity, spreading within the church, (ver. 9.) Concurrently therewith, worldly

cance in the prophecy; but which, by interpreting it of some sect, makes the judgment thereof pointless and unpractical. On the other hand, there is in the church a peculiar invention, without any stigma in the prophecy. That invention is clerisy. Who that reflects at all, but must see that herein is the very gangrene, aye the very root, of the apostasy. If this thing be not of God, as most certainly it is not, then it is an awful setting aside of God's order. Moreover, its consequences have been both most prolific and most disastrous. Yet, strangely, in a prophecy of the stages of the apostasy, not a word is said of it: but once admit that Nicolaitanism is this clerisy, and then you neither have a word without the thing to correspond, nor the thing without the judgment.

4. This clerisy, or clericalism, would begin with souls desiring to have some one in the assembly to lean upon, where there was not faith to reckon upon God. Gifted and carnal men would soon like this place accorded to them. From practice it would, specially when copies of the bible were few, become an accredited doctrine. The introduction of Judaism, as the church declined, would much help on all this novelty and apostasy. This is precisely what we find in the panorama. In the first epistle the DEEDS of the Nicolaitanes; in the second, Judaism; in the third, it has grown into the DOCTRINE of the Nicolaitanes. Thus, again, all is perfectly in harmony with the position.

5. In the third epistle this doctrine of the Nicolaitanes is connected with the doctrine of Balaam. The former word, which ought to have been translated, means, "Those who con-

ease, and a non-taking up of the cross, are hinted at in the words, "But thou art rich." The old copyists, through not understanding why there should be blame here, changed Christ's word. [The proper

quer the laity, or people." The latter word means, "Those who devour the people." When, in process of time, the apostasy had so developed itself, that the clericals had become a distinct caste, these would, of course, most profit by the world and the church becoming joined. This brings into exceeding vividness the touches of the third scene. Again, the point of the teaching here has been lost by the forgetfulness of interpreters, that the antitype of Balaam's successful temptation is not to be found in fleshly, but in spiritual fornication. Thus the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes looks at priestly assumption; the doctrine of Balaam respects the worldly profit accruing to the clericals, when the world and the church joined hands.

6. Now follows the popery of the fourth scene, when Jezebel gives out that she is God's prophet, and leads God's servants further into worldliness. And thus, from the assembly first leaning on some gifted individual, there arose, naturally the desire that such an one should be an educated man; next, that he should be ordained; next, that the ordination should be by some celebrity episcopal. And thus the biter was bit. Others began, in their turn, to lord it over the clericals. The ecclesiastical tree shot up, and spread forth its branches wonderfully. But it is an upas tree.

I must add, that the above note is not written with any intention of proving clerisy a human invention. This I have assumed to be acknowledged as a fact, and obediently acted on by readers. All I maintain *here*, is that this very wicked thing is the Nicolaitanism of the text.

Greek is *αλλα πλουσιος ει*, as all the critics admit, and not *πλουσιος δε ει*.] The expression which the Lord used denotes reprehension: "But you have waxed rich;" whilst they changed it unto what imports encouragement, as, "Cheer up, you are rich in heaven." The true word of Christ is of reproof uttered in grief.

Hence, as effect follows cause, the Lord in mercy sent trouble and persecution, that His church might once more understand His heavenly call. As to Satan, who would certainly have a hand in the persecution too, his thought would be terror at the rapid spread of Christianity, and his object, therefore, a violent, persistent and systematic endeavour to uproot it. Every word here, consequently, savours of the crucible and the furnace. Thus, the term *Smyrna*, means "myrrh," which was used for dead persons. This church is reminded by the Lord, that though He too died, He lives again. She also is exhorted to be faithful, though prison or death be the result. And in this way shall the crown of life be won.

Satan's attempt to devour the church failed. The Lord's discipline proved to many to be salutary. If some were subjected to martyrdom, this would necessarily attract the attention of the world to the new creed, and to the new sect. And accordingly, though only few would, at such a crisis, seek fellow-

ship with the sufferers, multitudes would learn much as to the difference of the new faith and people from all around them. This may well prepare us for the third scene. He is an unpractised warrior who has only one arrow in his quiver. Not so Satan! Force had failed against the church. Could not fraud succeed? The world had attempted in vain to annihilate the church. What if it could seduce it! What if the church could be prevailed on to abandon the line of separation, and so of witness for her Lord! What if the church could be induced to accept the overtures of the world, and unite her lot with its own! so might she dream that she had won the world for Christ. This, accordingly, came to pass. Hence we come to

Scene the third.—The church in Pergamos. The third stage in the church's decline. (ii. 12—17.) Union of church and world. Here, in its due place, follow the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. There is clearly an affinity, a sort of understood connexion, between these two. The one word means, "Those who conquer the people," or laity; the other, "Those who devour them," or destroy them. How this is done the type in Numbers suggests, with the obvious difference, that in the antitype it is spiritual fornication, as Jezebel's or Popery's harlotry in the fourth scene,

and as the whore of Babylon's whoredom are spiritual also. And the comparison of these altogether serves greatly to establish the proof, that in not one of these, Nicolaitanes, or Balaamites, or Jezebel's, or the whore of Babylon's uncleanness, is it a fleshly uncleanness that is referred to. Then what is?

After Balaam had abortively endeavoured to curse Israel, we learn from this scripture, that he it was who instigated Balak to tempt Israel to fornication, and with no little success too, as we learn from Numbers xxv.

The limits of these pages preclude me from sketching the events of this third stage in the church's decline. Nor need I do this. They are well known, and their consequences remain and are defended and gloried in still by the clericals, or Nicolaitanes, to this very day. The world and the church joined hands and became one—Christendom. So in the term Pergamos, there is the Greek word for marriage; and the term itself denotes a tower—Babel.

Also the Lord speaks out more distinctly in the way of blame than He had before. In the first epistle, where He had pointed at the Nicolaitanes, He had almost acquitted the church, in general, of participation in that guilty course. But not so now. There is intense force in the Greek of ver. 15.

“Thou thyself,” the church, hast (“THERE,” ver. 14=within thee) those who hold this wicked doctrine. Whence, by the bye, we learn not only that bad doctrine Christ hates; but He expects His true people to keep it out from their midst.

Lastly: the word *Antipas* may mean, either one who is against every one, or who is against the Father. Doubtless, in the historical aspect of these churches, this was the name of some individual in the church in Pergamos. But still, in the prophetic aspect of these epistles, which is the most important one; then, if the former rendering of the word be accepted, the commendation would point at the few, the very few, who, when all else were jubilant at the world's conversion to the church and to Christ, wept in secret at the fatal mistake. If, however, the other translation of the word be preferred, then there may be a glance at the Arian controversy, which at this time largely prevailed within the church.

Scene the fourth.—The church in Thyatira. (ii. 18 to 29.) A profounder depth in ecclesiastical abominations disclosed. A glance or two here may suffice for identification of much of this picture with papal times and ways. The reader will easily, for himself, be able to perceive many other references to this state of things. But here observe Jezebel! A woman to the front, and not the Man Christ. The church, so

called, the church exalting "herself," and becoming all the while more utterly sunk in apostasy and in worldliness. The import of the term Jezebel is a "dunghill." Thus all the monstrous doctrines and practices of the popish system are, by one expressive word, characterised by the Lord Jesus.

And this Jezebel has children, wicked also, and doomed to perish. These are, by the laws of homogeneity, evidently "national churches."

The false prophets, too, are in hundreds many supported from *her* table.

Now the Lord's people are called quite out of all this, and instructed, that if they would overcome, they must keep themselves as a remnant, finding their way out of Babylon. The beginning of the 24th verse should read thus: "But to you I say, who are **THE REMNANT** in Thyatira." Their sufferings for their separation and testimony may be alluded to in the word Thyatira, which means "Bruised incense." Again, in Christ here calling Himself the Son of God, and speaking of His feet as resembling white hot copper, as though they burned in a furnace, (ii. 18 with i. 15,) the reference probably is to Dan. iii. 25, where some were delivered by the Son of God from the flames, who had refused, in their day, to bow down to the king of Babylon's image. These here are not so rescued as those had

been ; because Christians are called to take up the cross, and with a heavenly calling. But they are encouraged to await God's time of triumph and of glory in Christ's future kingdom ; and not as popery would have it, that the sway of the ecclesiastics was Christ's own. (Verses 26, 27.) *

Scene the fifth.—The church in Sardis. (iii. 1—6.) —Protestantism. The testimony of those separated and suffering souls has not been in vain. The eyes of many have been opened, aye, of whole nations, not indeed to Christ ; but to the grossness of the corruptions in which they had been held. So far, so good ! Sardis, from a Hebrew root, means “those escaping.” And how had these peoples been thus far brought out of Babylon's abominations ? By the gospel, which, in Christ's account, had been so extensively and faithfully proclaimed, that He could say, “Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast.”

* There are very many more particulars on which I might have enlarged. But I fear lest I should be too diffuse, or be tedious. The words, “few things,” in ver. 20, should be omitted. Instead of “that woman,” the true reading is a singular one, viz., “Thy wife,” and may advert to the celibacy of the clergy of those times. Here, too, we have mention of the depths of Satan. Only be it observed, Christ does not Himself call this awful state of things reached by the professing church by this term ; He only says that *men* marvel at these abominations.

But these peoples and nations had been, in consequence, puffed up through their newly-acquired knowledge. Such had a "name," as if they were somewhat now in advance of others, yea, as if in deed and in truth before God they lived. As if, forsooth, the putting away of gross evils, without an actual turning unto the living God, availed aught! As if, indeed, the unclean spirit, when it had gone out from a man, or from a generation, might not return again with sevenfold power, and find all prepared for him! So, too, we may say, that whilst in the Reformation there was a work of God; yet Protestantism has in it that which is merely human, and may be, and in many cases is, beyond popery, a further hardening in iniquity in two ways. For there is increased responsibility, through increase of light. And nothing condemns as does light that is not heartily embraced. Secondly: mere Protestantism has in it an infidel tendency, as experience has largely proved. And as they were Jews who had returned from Babylon who murdered the Son of God; so probably the Beast, that is, the Roman emperor, who will yet, after the rapture of the church, sweep away nearly every vestige of the name of Christ, will arise out of and be elected by the Protestant world. Ah! empty boasting avails not to ward off His judgment; rather, it brings it nearer, (Isaiah ii. 12.)

We learn, too, from this fifth picture, where Protestantism has failed, besides the non-turning of the heart to God. It, too, has leaned on the world. Thus Christ threatens, in ver. 8, to treat this church just as He will the world; as if, albeit its elation of spirit, it were identified with that world. So, too, those whom in this picture and epoch He owns as His own, are said to have kept their garments, that is, as James i. explains, "unspotted from the world." So far indeed have these attained in separation, that they have registers of those in fellowship with them, and whom they believe to be with themselves truly the Lord's. To this practice the Lord appears to make favourable allusion in verse 5. But now in these days, as the Bridegroom's advent draws nigh, God calls His chosen further out. (Matt. xxv. 6.) Hence, we have

Scene the sixth.—The church in Philadelphia. (iii. 7—13.) This picture with the seventh portray our own day. Probably, we are ourselves at the close of the sixth scene, and at the commencement of the seventh. Here we find, that although the wicked will still do wickedly, and still call evil good, clinging to their Judaised Christianity; still, a further advance out of religious apostasy is certainly here made by the godly. And, as if their action were painful, and their path of separation to

be persisted in, the Lord points these to His future kingdom, when they shall have need to "GO NO MORE OUT." Here in this picture the religious formalists are thrown into the background. Probably they are glanced at indeed in other verses besides ver. 9. Thus when Christ says to His own, "Thou hast kept My Word," He may have an eye to the wicked who are keeping what they call the church's rubrics. However, let us, for our encouragement, listen to what the Lord says of His own in our day.

They keep His Word—twice said. See verses 8 and 10.) This obedience to the Word requires "patience," (ver. 10.) It is well to notice this, because it is quite possible that some may adopt certain principles of the Word, because these suit their taste; or because then they can hear themselves prate; or because they have drunk into the democratic spirit of the world. But those truly keeping "the word of His patience," find that such obedience costs them something. But obedience that costs nothing, is worth nothing.

They have not denied His name. Similarly in Malachi, the expression, My name, is found seven times. Here, too, note the emphasis thrown on the word "My," which is used seven or eight times. Verily, this ought to animate us when our hands hang down and our hearts sink, at so few accepting God's own principles—at so many either ridiculing

them, or abandoning them after they had embraced them. How strange is all this. We seem almost brought face to face with the Lord. He knows the way of the godly. Though He may appear to be silent a little longer, here we see He knows all. The conscience exercised as to His Word He does not despise. Such are to continue a little longer, show brotherly love (Philadelphia) to each other, and in preaching His gospel, and in begetting children in the faith, through Him who, with David's key, opens so that no one shuts; and who has set before such an open door of ministry. These are to be buoyed up by His great promise, and by the knowledge that, as now, they have His testimony that they please Him; so suddenly shall they be removed all from the scene of judgment to the immediate presence and embrace of God. Oh, how near these things are to us! Where is our faith? Then verses 11 and 12 show there is indeed a reward for the righteous; and a Lord, who, though silent as yet, save to the ear of faith, is judging in the midst of the churches.

Scene the seventh.—The church in Laodicea. (iii. 14—22.) Final rejection of the professing body; that is to say, by the rapture of the true church.

How imminent His interposition is here, is seen both in the warning, "I am about to vomit thee out

of my mouth," as also by His position of standing at the door. This language proves the perfection of His grace to the very last moment. It also discloses the insensibility of the great professing body, in that whilst it persists to the last in calling itself the church of Christ, the Lord is outside of that body, and summoning those who will to open the door, to come out to Him, that He may come in to sup with such. The word "sup," too, suggests the time, and that the hour is late. But further, the standing at the door presages how near the separation of the two classes is. That this symbol is one not only of grace to the last, but also of judgment near, is evident from James v. 9. He calls, in verse 21, from polluted rest and worldly honor and ease, to the sharing of His own throne by the obedient victor. So He counsels souls once more, to seek from Himself for the true riches of grace; with power to walk in separation from evil; conjoined with divine teaching from the Word, that they may not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

Yet not by any violent effort will the mass of professors have reached the goal of apostasy. Rather, the stages of iniquity seem to glide each one into the next. Now behold, in conclusion, the picture of Christendom, just ere Christ speaks out, IN ACTION, *glorious and terrible*.

The word Laodicea means, "Justice for the

people." The democratic element here is in the forefront. It contrasts designedly with the Nicolaitanism at the commencement of the decline. Who can but see and hear the beginnings of this final condition, even now ?

Lukewarmness, that is to say, a perfect jumble of sacred and worldly matters. The word here does not, as is oft supposed, point chiefly to half-heartedness. But like as this lukewarmness would be produced by the pouring of hot and cold water both together into the same vessel ; so intense worldliness will be varnished over by plausible and humanitarian and religious pretences.

Much missionary zeal is contemplated, as another symptom of the last days ; whilst sin is not repented of, nor the religious world forsaken. "Thou thyself (*συ ει ο ταλαιπωρος*) art the wretched one and the pitiable," is Christ's last check to the thoughtfulness for others being used as an opiate for self-deceit. (See 2 Timothy iii.) This expression of the Lord Jesus, "It is your own self" that needs the pity, "YOU," who are so wretched,—all this is intensely solemn in this picture of the professing church, at the close of the dispensation, that is to say, now. The words reveal that this professing mass will not believe in its own desperate condition ; but will persist, instead, in pitying others. This sort of thing is very cheap, very easy, and very empty.

But in all this there is nothing gross ! Yet here is the state that most offends the Lord ; so that, as He vouches, He can endure all this no longer. Boastfulness also characterised Judah at the last. So was she punished, (Micah iii. 11, 12.) But here is boastfulness, religiousness, worldliness, fierce democracy, with pious pretensions, missionary boxes for the heathen, with a Christ outside the whole thing. And there is that which the Lord is about to reject, in profound ignorance of His judgment and of her doom. So nothing evidently remains to awaken this self-contented, boastful Christendom, but for the Lord, by His snatching away His own into His presence, to mark out in action, distinct at last, *at last*, who are His and who are not. Then, “when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door,” and such “begin to stand without, and to say, Lord, Lord, open unto us,” He shall disown them finally and for ever. Here the passage, Luke xiii. 26, points at the *hearers*. But remarkably, in the parallel place in Matt. vii. 22, the *preachers* are also many of them disowned and rejected too.

LECTURE IV.

CHAPTERS IV. & V.—“HE MUST REIGN.”

CHAP. IV.—WHAT WILL GOD DO NEXT?

IN the event of the church utterly failing in her witness for Christ; in the event of the church, instead of standing persistently in separation to her Lord, greedily embracing the overtures of the world's friendship, yea, joining hands with that world that cast Him out, even to the extent of the Lord Himself being discarded by her (iii. 20)—not in name, oh no! quite the reverse, yet in reality—what will God do next?

Now the scene changes. It is no longer Christ walking amid the seven golden candlesticks. The attention of the seer is directed towards heaven, where a door is opened, and whence a voice—the same voice that he heard before, i.e., at the first,* is

* Ἡ φωνή, ἡ πρώτη, The first voice, or, The voice heard at the first. This expression is to identify the speaker in iv. 1, with Him whom John had beheld walking in the midst of the churches in i. 11, and to show that that divine Speaker had now taken a new position.

heard proceeding now. He who had bidden John write in a book the records of His omniscient judgment of the churches, now summons him to a new stand-point.

Thus the break between chapters ii. and iii. from this one (iv.) is marked enough. In those we have "the testimony of Jesus" as to the wretched departure from Himself, that, in His episcopal visitation of the churches, He had found there; but in this, with the subsequent chapters, we have "the Word of God" as to what He is about to do, and as to the condign vengeance which He "must" inflict on apostate Christendom. In those, as we have traced in the preceding panorama, we have the sinful causes revealed; but in these remaining chapters we have the dire consequences, in heaven's wrath finally and completely aroused. In chap. iii. the Lord is seen outside the professing mass, who had shut Him out from their midst, and whom He was about to shut out by the taking to Himself for ever His own true saints, the victors, out of the apostasy; in other words, by the rapture of the church, which there is future, though imminent; but in chap. iv. this grand consummation of the heavenly call is completed. The true church is with her Lord.

Hence the question, "What will God now do?" must be further expanded. It is not a question here of heavenly grace; but of the earthly rights of Jesus.

What will God do yonder, in that world down there, where Christ has been a second time rejected—not only on the cross, but by His Spirit, who testified of Him in glory. Even now we might answer the question, by quoting those well known words of Ezekiel (xxi. 27), “I will overturn, overturn, overturn, and it (‘the crown’) shall be no more until He come whose right it is, and I will give it Him.” But in saying this, I should be anticipating too much.

Yes, the scene is now in heaven, whence God begins afresh. His commencement is from His own throne. Hence, though the investiture of the slain Lamb, with the kingdom, is the subject of chaps. iv. and v.; yet the investiture itself, as we here behold, takes place in heaven. From the hand of God alone does He (or would He) receive the title deeds of earth. All is arranged and established as to this new kingdom, first in its relationship to the throne of God, and to those in the immediate vicinity thereof; and thence outwards and lower down, until “every creature in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea,” all join in the anthem of praise to God and to the Lamb. (Chap. v. 13.) And therefore we might distinguish between chapters iv. and v. thus: chap. iv. exhibits the last moment *in heaven*, ere Christ is formally invested with this world’s sovereignty, and ere the earth is begun to be

placed on a redemption-basis; chap. v. is the first moment *still in heaven* of the new order of things as concerns this said earth. Only, I repeat, because it is essential to the understanding of the position of chapters iv. and v. to the entire book, God begins from the tip-top, from His own throne. Then those near that throne are looked at here only in their several relationships to Christ's new sovereignty. That is to say, the theme is not so much concerning heaven's own and higher glory; though much, indeed, even of this, in necessary and beautiful and encouraging glimpses, as in this very chapter, we also have. But it is the taking up in power by God Himself of the affairs of this earth; which at present, to the eye of sense, He appears quite to have forgotten. For as long as the church, the partakers of the heavenly calling, are continued here, earthly matters remain, on God's part, in abeyance. Our God is a God of order. When God has told out in action full, the value of Christ's own blood, as it is estimated in His own pure uncreated light, by at last summoning and welcoming the heavenly saints into His immediate presence for ever; then Christ will assume a lower attitude too, and claim His earthly rights. Then His earthly people, also beloved, will come into remembrance before God.

Then it will be seen, as is indicated here, that God has centred in His Son all the blessing that man has

abused in all dispensations. Here in iv. and v. we find the Lordship of the Adamic dispensation ; the rainbow of the judged and cleansed earth ; the glory of Israel, that Ezekiel had seen removed from Jerusalem ; and the title to church blessing in the admitted worthiness of the only worthy One.

The eye directed upward first falls on God ; or, rather, on His throne. For as it is, throughout these chapters, the question of the earth that is in hand ; so, at the outset, a certain obscurity envelopes that throne, or rather, the Occupant of the throne is indistinctly perceived by the seer. An undefined glory, as of a jasper and sardine stone, is all the description which, at the first, he can give. A rainbow, indeed, is seen there—a proof that God has not forgotten the earth, and a pledge that His whole purpose towards it shall yet be accomplished. But presently the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, is declared to be the worthy Victor. And when His worthiness has been asserted by Himself, and admitted by God, the obscurity is quite removed, the Occupant of the throne is fully discerned, and in the midst of the throne is descried a Lamb that had been slain.*

* I have assigned above what appears to me to be the leading thoughts in the description of the Throne-Sitter, as given in chapter iv. I may add that the jasper and sardine (or sardius) were the first and last jewels of the high priest's breastplate

The eye of the seer rests upon a throne "set," and a Throne-Sitter. Down in that world below there is confusion, rebellion against God, and every evil work. But earth's discord and opposition perturb not Him. "He that *SITTETH* in the heavens laughs" His foes to scorn. (Ps. ii.) What though

Exodus xxviii. 17—20; only, remarkably, in the inverse order to that in which they are mentioned here. Is this to suggest that all divine life and holy character proceed from Himself alone, as colors from the sun? Also on the jasper and sardine were engraved the names of Benjamin, (son of the right hand,) and of Reuben, (See! a son.) Also what is signified in the fact of the rainbow being mentioned here as before His throne, is clearly that God has not forgotten His promises about the earth's blessing, and that He has the faithful witness (as the rainbow appears to be termed in Psalm lxxxix. 37) of His covenant with Noah ever before Him. (See Is. liv. 9, 10.) So when the Lord's time has all but arrived to interpose in power on earth, He is seen with a rainbow still, (Rev. x.), rather with *the* rainbow, (*ἡ ῥαίς*;) that is to say, with this very one "upon His head." Here it is described as like an emerald, the stone on which, of old, the name JUDAH was engraved. (Exodus xxviii. 10 with 18.) The rainbow was "round" the throne, as if a more perfect one was there than ever to be seen here, as if there was nothing there to interfere with its completeness. Some old writers have also suggested such facts, as that the rainbow, when we see it, is so placed that were an arrow on it ready to be discharged, it would point upwards; and, again, that there is no arrow, as if it had already been discharged at Him up there.

all else rock to and fro, and "the foundations be destroyed;" still "the Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven." (Ps. xi.) That throne is not only itself stable and at rest; but everything itself, all the old creation, shall be removed before it. (See xx. 11.) The time for judgment, has, however, hardly yet arrived; yet so nearly that even now the throne is dressing itself for judgment, and belching forth fire and flame. How unlike is all this to the throne of perfect grace, which it is now and must remain to be whilst we are here, and whilst Christ appears in the presence of God for us. But when that throne has once begun to vomit forth its forked judgments, these we find continue to increase in soreness, until even He Himself shall descend "in flaming fire, taking vengeance." For whilst here we read of the "lightnings, and thunderings, and voices," there is a notable addition in viii. 5, where we have "voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake." Then in xi. 19, it is said that there were "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." See also xvi. 18—21, where similar language is used, but still more forcibly. That is to say, the judgments surge up from that throne, and teem forth in more appalling proportions, as His time for interposition nears. But here in iv. 5, this divine storm is only rising; it has not yet, as quickly it will do, overspread the

entire horizon. Likewise, in Dan. vii., in a scene already referred to in chap. i., the Ancient of Days is beheld in garments of white sitting on a throne of flame!

But now, who are these twenty-four elders, sitting on thrones (*θρονοι*, the same word as is used of His throne in verse 2), so tranquilly, when Divine judgment is bursting forth in such tempestuous streams? It is evident, from their calm attitude, that that judgment cannot scathe them—that they are beyond it or above it, and, anyhow, clean out of it, and consciously so. And who again are those four living things, or creatures, (*ζωα*, not beasts), also said to be in the midst of the throne, as the Lamb is, (v. 6,) and also said to be round about the throne, (iv. 6,) as is predicated of the elders, (iv. 4.)

In the first place, we must ascertain whether these are two different classes of creatures, or only one. At first sight, they might probably appear to be two, being distinguished the one from the other in verse 6. Also, if they are only one class, why are they mentioned separately at all—the elders *before* the statement as to the sea of glass, but the living creatures *after* it? There can be no question that each of these classes owes its place there to the blood of the Lamb. This is most certain from verse 9, where unitedly they sing, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed

us* to God by Thy blood." . And if, it is argued, these are two classes, may not the elders represent the Old Testament saints, and the living creatures the New Testament believers, the Church? Certainly the Old Testament saints will be raised at the same time as the Church, (2 Thess. i. 10; Heb. xi. 40). But do these Old Testament saints actually figure here? In my opinion, undoubtedly not. This book shows that the church is outside of the judgment altogether. It is not written in a treatise form, mapping out everything that is to be done, and every one's place. If we would learn this, we must place the several books and testimonies of Scripture together. It does not necessarily follow, because two classes of creatures are here specified, that therefore two different classes of saints are represented. It must ever be borne in mind that all this scene is throughout symbolic. Hence the symbols must be interpreted. Then we can perceive which way they point. Double symbols are common enough. Already, from chapter i., we have seen that Christ is both Ancient of Days and Son of Man. Again, no one denies that the description of the living creatures here, is a description of the mystic cherubim. But by inductive evidence, it can be proved that the seraphim are identi-

* The "us" (*ἡμᾶς*) is omitted in some manuscripts. But it is found in so many others, as to warrant its retention above.

cal with the cherubim, only in a different character. Indeed, there are some allusions in this chap. iv. to these cherubim, AS the seraphim that Isaiah speaks of in his chapter vi. And now in chapter i. we have listened to the church singing, Thou hast "made us kings and priests, (or rather, 'a kingdom, priests') to God." But who maintains that these are two distinct orders of creatures? Now what if these elders are the church, as crowned and enthroned priests, like their Lord—and if these living creatures or cherubim are in chapter v. the same people, the church, but in active rule under God? The expression, "Kings and priests," is a very comprehensive one. It denotes those (1) who rule creation for God, and (2) who lead creation's worship of God. The first term regards their position creation-wards; the latter, their position God-wards. Now this, it appears, is just what we have here. In iv. the church are already as crowned priests; but not till chapter v. are the church seen to be the cherubim too; that is to say, not until Christ has taken the book and assumed earth's sovereignty. For in v. you read of the angels as distinct from the living creatures; but not in iv. Why not? Because not till v. does Christ claim the sceptre! Then the saints at once burst forth in song, "*We shall reign*;" and consequently the angels, being superseded in their administration of creation by the Son of Man and His fellows, fall back into an outer

circle, (v. 11.) Hence, too, it is, that when the Lord Jesus commences, as he does, instantly to open the book and the seals thereof, these new cherubim also at once begin to act with Him, and in turn severally call out, "Come, or come on." The words "and see," in chapter vi., ought to be omitted.

Above, I have assumed that the cherubim symbolize *Divine power, or rule administered FROM HEAVEN*. The fact is, that the symbol complete is again, as we learn from Ezekiel i. and x., a double one, viz, of "cherubim" and "wheels": the one denoting *divine rule administered in heaven*; the other, the *wheels, divine rule administered ON EARTH*. But here, because the earth is in rebellion, and requiring still His interposition in judgment, the wheels are not mentioned. The prophet Ezekiel beheld the sign of the withdrawal of divine glory from earth; and heard the cry of consternation, or of grief, "O wheel!" (x. 13.) But in Daniel vii., where God's reign on earth is set up, there again, most wonderfully, we read of "*His wheels as burning fire*," vii. 9. But in this our chapter iv., it is the cherubic rule, or rule heavenly. Now, as we have proved that chapter iv. represents the last moment *ere* earth is begun to be put upon a redemption-basis; so therefore the angels there are the cherubim. But since in chapter v., as we have already seen, (and shall further perceive when we come to speak on chapter v.), we have the first

moment in heaven, *after* the dominion of the earth has been handed over to the Son of Man; so there, necessarily, those who are His co-heirs begin their reign simultaneously with and under Him, and these in chapter v. are the cherubim. Therefore it is that we see the church, as the crowned elders or priests, in iv., before we see them also as the active executors, in conjunction with the Lamb; of the power of God; before, in short, we see them as the cherubim. And therefore it is that these, "His fellows," are represented in these chapters full of symbolic scenery, as two classes, and not as one only.

Now as to details in the account here first of the elders. Their number as twenty-four is obviously in allusion to David's arrangement of the priesthood into twenty-four courses for the service of the future temple to be built by his son Solomon. (See 1 Chron. xxiv.) These priests here are crowned and enthroned, simply because they are in companionship with their Lord, the great King Priest. They are not exactly on the same throne with Him yet, because here the Lamb has not yet sat down upon His *own* throne. In v., He is distinctly seen to be standing, that is, to have already arisen from off His Father's throne; but not yet taken His *own*. Therefore, the church's call and salvation is then complete. For until such is the case, He remains sitting at the right hand of God, (Heb. x. 12.) But already every mark of honor is accorded to them,

as we well know, for His sake. They sit down before God—aye, and covered or crowned too before Him. Surely never before did creature the most exalted sit down in the presence of God! From Job i. it would appear as if not always were the angels in the immediate presence of God; but only on certain occasions. And Gabriel, evidently of high rank in the heavenly hierarchy, in his address to Zechariah, says, “I am Gabriel, that *stand* in the presence of God,” (Luke i. 19.) Also in 1 Kings xxii., Micaiah states that he saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven *standing* by Him, (Daniel vii.) But here we have quite a new order of things, indeed; viz: the redeemed saints of the present dispensation seen in their heavenly home, and in their representative character, seated and covered, as to their heads, before God; and in perfect calmness and serenity sitting there; notwithstanding, as we have seen, that the Divine judgment and wrath are ready to burst forth in unmitigated fury upon a guilty world. There they are all, who have descended as sons from the anti-typical Aaron, not with mitres of linen; but with golden crowns—the gold symbolic of Divine righteousness. Aaron himself, I trow, never dreamed of sitting down in the tabernacle before God. But our High Priest not only sits down Himself; but causes us to sit down with Him. Yet, if the exaltation of these His people is very high; so

correspondingly and consequently is their abasement very deep ; they fall down before Him that sits on the throne, and cast their crowns before it. This worship in definite action here demonstrates that these are not present in heaven prospectively, but actually, and in their glorified bodies ; that is to say, at the period when this chapter iv. ceases to be prophecy, and is an accomplished fact. Their number twenty-four reveals that then all will have reached home safely, which is not true as long as any of us depart by death to be with Christ ; for then we leave others, also our brethren, behind us here. No, these are in their own home finally and for ever in glory and exaltation. Contrast the case of those who go through the great tribulation, and who STAND before the throne, in numbers numberless, and with palms in their hands, not with crowns on their heads. For these will be monuments of the length and the breadth of the love of Christ, than as now, His little flock, (or, better, “little, little flock,” μικρον ποιμνιον), who are destined to be witnesses rather of the depth and height of that love. Still, amid it all, as we here see—

“ The saints who wear heaven’s brightest crowns,
In deepest adoration bend ;
The weight of glory bows them down
The most, when most their souls ascend.
And nearest to the throne will be
The footstool of humility.”

The connection, and yet the diversity, of the two classes of heavenly beings mentioned in our chapter, viz., of the four living creatures on the one hand, and of the twenty-four elders on the other, we have now traced. And we have seen that, whilst the cherubim of old represent the activities of the power of God, as exercised in heaven, the elders impersonate the most exalted worshippers of God. From the very beginning of the account of this wondrous scene in heaven afforded us in chaps. iv. and v., these latter have been shown to be identical with the believers of the present dispensation—the church of the living God, when once she has been caught up to her heavenly home. But the cherubim in chap. iv. are necessarily angelic agents, and not until chap. v. does the church come to be represented by these symbolic beings; because not until chap. v. is the sovereignty of the world handed over to the slain Lamb. But when once He has taken the book, then, simultaneously, the angelic administration ceases; and hence, whilst you read only of two classes, elders and cherubim, in chap. iv.; you have distinct mention of three classes, viz: of elders, and cherubim, and angels, in chapter v. For these last then retire into an outer circle, and surround not only the throne of God; but are also outside the ranks of the elders and the cherubim. Not unto angels is the sway of the world to come given. This belongs to the Son

of Man, and to His blood-bought associates. Hence their cry, "We shall reign," is heard as soon as ever the Lamb has been formally invested king by the Throne-sitter.

Now as to the details afforded us here of these mystic cherubim! It is true, indeed, these living creatures are not called cherubim here. But the description here accords so well with what is said of the cherubim in Ezekiel i. and x., that there can be no doubt of their identity. The term cherubim itself denotes "the profoundly knowing ones." And so, correspondently, here we read that these creatures are "full of eyes within, and before, and behind." In heaven, the sight of God is, of course, the supreme joy. These, then; have this joy in abundance. Our eye in heaven, is akin to our faith here. Thereby God is known, and lived on, and delighted in. His love within their souls, and His ways before and behind them, these cherubim understand. Not only have they eyes to see; they are "full of eyes." Also Christians now are believers, that is to say, they are those whose life consists in eyeing God. Only there presently will be the open vision of the living God. And with God all divine beauty and transforming loveliness, to be seen as He is; and with the church, all eyes to see, and so to get glory, what to perfect joy can there be lacking?

2. Consequently these are also the seraphim.

This term signifies "the burning ones." And to this agrees the expression which we find here, *τα ζῶα* "the living ones." For the sight of God is life indeed. No wonder that, being full of eyes, they are full of ardour. Here it is well to recall to mind the account given in Ezekiel i. of the fire enfolding itself within, and of the cherubim without, and of the Spirit filling them, insomuch as that "whither the Spirit was to go, they went." And as to their six wings, of which we read in Isaiah vi., as well as here, we are there informed that four of their wings were for adoration, as they were inflamed and overpowered with what they beheld; and the other two were for service. (Compare Romans viii. 9, 14.)

8. But the new cherubim, if so I may express myself, in reference to the activities of divine rule passing from angels, as in chap. iv.—to the church, as in chap. v.—owe their position to redeeming love. (Rev. v. 9; and see note at page 80.) They are the church of God. Hence, whilst we read in Heb. xii. of this trifold order, viz., "angels, and church of the firstborn, and God;" in Rev. v., correspondingly, we read of "angels, and the living creatures, and the throne." This parallel certainly establishes the position of the church and the living creatures in chapter v. being the same.

4. Yea, the place which these living creatures are said to occupy, is "in the midst of the throne, and

round about the throne." Now, as long as the world is not put upon a redemption basis, this place may be and is possessed by the angelic executors of this power. So, whenever you read of the cherubim in the Old Testament, you read in the context of God putting forth this power. Then in all those cases, the angels were His administrators—"ministers of His that did His pleasure." But when once the time has come for the kingdom to be handed over to the Son of Man, then this place must of course be theirs who "are brought nigh by the blood of Christ." Hence in the tabernacle of old, the cherubim were made out of the very same lump of gold as was the mercy-seat. They were made out of the very mercy-seat itself. Nor are we at any loss as to who are hereby signified. The interpretation we have in Heb. ii., where, as it seems to me, is a sure allusion to the mercy-seat, and to the cherubim. "For both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." How can He be ashamed of them, when their life is from His own? He sanctified Himself, (John xvii. 19), and took a new position in resurrection, on purpose that there, in that new position, He might associate us with Himself. The fuller the light He brings us into, the distincter, and the more precious, is our title to be there seen to be, since it is His own blood. And our title

there is identical with His own. For in Heb. ix. He goes into the holiest "by His own blood;" and in Heb. x. 19, He beckons us in there too, and on the very same ground.

5. Hence, we read here of these living creatures as "*four.*" Occasionally a fewer number is mentioned; but never a larger. These resemble, as we are here informed, a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle. All this description is evidently symbolic. There will naturally occur to the mind of the intelligent reader, the diversities in the scope of the four gospels. The first two of these, as we all know, set forth the official glories of Christ; and the other two His personal glories. Matthew and Mark pour-tray Him, the one as the royal Master, and the other as the lowly Servant; or in symbol, as the lion and the ox. Luke and John set Him forth, the former as the Son of Man, and the latter as the Son of God; or in symbol again, as with the face of a man, and as the undazzled eagle. Now, if the activities of God's power could be exercised of old by the angelic cherubim; how much more and better can they presently be by those who are, in very truth, united to that glorious One who is all that those gospels describe Him to be? If these qualities for rule and service, or at least their semblances, meet in the angels; how much more indeed are they in their fulness in Himself? Even we shall

be more competent than those angels to rule under God, because we are nearer to God, and because one Spirit is in us and in our Lord, and because we have been rescued by Him from disobedience and from independence.*

Little more remains to be remarked upon in this fourth chapter. It is singular, that whilst the difference between the elders and the cherubim is as we have now deduced it, still we find that the cherubim lead (chap. iv. 9), and the cherubim close the

* From this very symbol of the cherubim one with their Lord, we may therefore obtain a vivid picture of what the saints are to be when brought home, and of what individual Christians now in a sense are. They are those, as in the type, whose foundation is a blood-stained mercy-seat, and who have been in grace made partakers of the very nature of the mercy-seat itself. Thence they derive their very being. There ever are they bending towards it in adoration. If there were no mercy-seat; then no cherubim, no church! Also from the type, we behold the attachment of each one to the other, and to Jesus, the source of their life. And, as if redeeming love were the most precious thing in the universe, they cover the mercy-seat with their wings. The prince of Tyre, likened probably to Satan, ere he fell, is said to be the cherub that covereth. (Ezek. xxviii. 14, 15.) But these, one with Christ, have eternal life and the Holy Ghost from Him. And over them, and dwelling among them, is the glory of God. There is His rest for ever. He desired a temple. He has made it; and costly, and unique, and glorious is every member of it. (See Psalms lxxx. 1, and xcix. 1.)

worship of God. (chap. v. 14.) This serves to show that too wide a distinction must not be made between these two classes; and also, that those who are fittest to rule for God, are precisely they who are most penetrated with holy and exalted conceptions of God. So, too, in the *earthlies*. Israel, that is yet to be the first of the nations of the world, under its own glorious King Messiah (Micah iv. 8), is also to be a kingdom of priests. (Exod. xix. 6; Isaiah lxi. 6.)


With regard to the sea of glass, few words will suffice. Here again, as in the candlesticks of chap. i., and as in the altar of burnt-offering of chap. vi., and as in the altar of incense of chap. viii., there is obvious allusion to the Tabernacle and to the Temple of old. In fact, the entire groundwork of this book of the Revelation, is a chamber like that in which Jehovah fixed His dwelling among His people of old. But there is no veil here. John as a Christian, and so one of the new priests unto God, and within this Temple, can see from end to end thereof—can see all that takes place within it. Yet the differences of this temple here from each account in the Old Testament is most striking. Now, instead of a mercy-seat, or throne of grace, we behold a throne of judgment. Instead of a few priests ministering at the altar; we behold the entire church as priests, seated on thrones, and perfected for ever by His one offering. Instead of a single candlestick, with

six lights grouped around a centre stem *visible* ; here we have seven distinct candlesticks grouped around their divine Stem, Who is invisible. Of old, too, their light was within the holy place ; here we find they had been placed in a new position by God, to give light without for a time, by testimony to the world. In like manner the sea of glass is in most beautiful and perfect contrast with Moses' brazen laver, or with Solomon's molten sea. It seems placed much nearer to God's throne than either of those were, and even to be within the holy place itself. But specially there is no water in this new laver ! And why ? Because none is needed. Those twenty-four priests, representing the entire church of God, have each and all been already washed in the laver of regeneration. They need not then even the daily foot-washing in the water of the Word by their great High Priest. When once there, there is no need for washing any more for ever ; for nothing that defiles can come there. And hence the use of this sea of glass like unto crystal, is that those priests may behold their perfect purity, in which before God they ever appear. Not for cleansing, but for evidencing perfect cleanliness, is this new, as it were, laver here. Oh ! surely its new situation before the throne, and close to those crowned elders, is a testimony to our wonderment and joyful surprise, when we shall never again have to struggle against sin, much less to bewail it. This

its new place, and in its new character, seems to whisper to our amazed ecstasy then, in finding ourselves for ever fit for the holy eye of God. At present, it is a matter for faith, that we who are washed, are clean every whit ; but not so then. In this particular, too, faith shall be swallowed up of sight. We shall clearly see what God hath done to us, as well as what He hath done for us. John Baptist thought it the extremest feat of power, that God was able from stones to raise up children to Abraham. But we, from the dust and from the dunghill of a sinful world, have been lifted out and lifted up by grace and blood, and made to be suitable companions and worshippers of the living God and of His Christ for ever. Praise to His Name !

LECTURE V.

CHAPTER V.—EARTH'S SOVEREIGNTY.—“I WILL
GIVE IT HIM.”

 CHAPTERS iv. and v. are so intimately connected, that we have been obliged somewhat to anticipate our remarks upon the latter chapter, in the interpretation above of the former. Much, however, that is most important, yet remains to occupy our attention.

Now, having had our eye directed to the throne and to its surroundings, we must watch to learn what God is about to do as concerns apostate Christendom, and to a world steeped in iniquity. And in order that all foes may be subjected under His feet, He, our Lord, the Second Man, the Last Adam, must reign. (1 Cor. xv. 25.)

Again the eye is fixed on the central Object in the heavenly scene, the Throne-Sitter. And it is seen that in His right hand (the hand of power), are held THE TITLE DEEDS OF EARTH. Unto Adam, earth's sovereignty had been once committed. But he had

sinned, and consequently the subordinate and delegated sovereignty had reverted back again to God. And there those title deeds are to be given once again to whomsoever He will.

Now that this sealed scroll (*βιβλίον*) symbolizes the title deeds or sovereignty of the world, is evident from the following considerations :—

1. By the law, if a possession were sold, God ordained it should be redeemable if the vendor should ever be able to re-purchase it. (Lev. xxv. 25.) Now in cases where a redeemer actually obtained possession again of the inheritance, it was customary to have a sealed document in the hands of the person redeeming. (Jer. xxxii. 6—15.) Now, in Eph. i. 14, the inheritance has been purchased; but not redeemed or taken possession of in power. See also Matthew xiii. 44, where Christ not only buys the treasure (the church) hid in the field; but also buys the field, that is, the world itself. The sceptre and the dominion have slipped away from the hands of Adam, to be grasped firmly, when God's time has come, by the divine Son of Man. But on this proof I tarry not further, as some dispute it, and the evidence is abundant without it.

2. When the scroll is handed over to the once slain Lamb, mark the consequent praise expressed by those witnessing the action, and who understood its significancy. In words are uttered their acqui-

escence and delight in what God has done. What is that? The church at once bursts forth in rapture, Now “we shall *reign (on or) over the earth*”; i.e., as the “fellows” of their Lord. Again, next the angels, in a distinct allusion to the reign of King Solomon, celebrate the surpassing glories of David’s greater Son. In type, that falling sceptre of Adam had been grasped in the hands—and the fading glories of the old creation as to earth had for a while lighted on the heads—of David and of his son. See 1 Chron. xxix. 23, where Solomon is said to have sat on the throne of the Lord. But even the very last and faintest shadow of the kingdom had disappeared, when Zedekiah succumbed to Nebuchadnezzar. Now, all that was of God herein is to be revived and restored in an infinitely more illustrious and eternally stable manner by the Lord Jesus. Hence, in the allusion to Solomon by the angels, they signalize Christ’s glories in seven particulars. And lastly, because His dominion is not to be confined to this planet, but to extend to the very confines of creation; we read that every creature that is “in heaven,” as well as “on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,” rejoice at Christ’s accession to His delegated throne.

8. The opening of the Seals is the beginning, in act, on Christ’s part, of His taking possession of His kingdom; or rather, is His hardening His foes for

His vengeance preparatory thereto. The Trumpets and Vials are merely sub-divisions of the seventh Seal. Then in chapter xix., He comes down. He comes on purpose to reign. And until then, as the judgments are inflicted—that is to say, as the Seals of the scroll are in order opened—evidently throughout, possession of the world in power by Christ, is the one object in view.

4. Also compare this scene with that in Daniel vii., where One like the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days. Then we are informed, by way of additional interpretation, that there is “given Him dominion, etc., that all nations should serve Him.” (See also Psalm xxiv.)

But now, if Christ is to be invested by God with the kingdom, on account of His worthiness, it is fitting that this should be done in full open court—done most publicly and in the face of day. It is only seemly that the kingdom of righteousness, when at last the time has arrived for it to be set up in power, should be set up with extreme attention to the righteousness of the appointment of the King Himself. Hence the challenge by a strong angel with a loud voice, in the audience of all creation: “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the Seals thereof?” Who is there can say that he has deserved to be entrusted by God; and that he is competent to take up the question of a world's

hostility to God, perfectly to dispose of it, and to order and establish all things in a righteous, holy, and divine manner ?

A pause ensues, during which John weeps, and one of the elders essays to comfort him. There is something stately and solemn in this pause ; since it is designed to give time to any creature to bethink himself, if he choose, and to assert his worthiness for this universal sovereignty, and his ability to cope with evil ; and on the part of the Lord Jesus, to rush in with His claim for the kingdom, would most surely not be His way. He who has so patiently waited these eighteen centuries, would surely continue to wait as long as this pause was proper, and in order to give time for the angel's challenge to reverberate through creation. And thus by the wrapt silence as to claim, the public summons receiving no response from the highest creature in heaven, or from any other, it is seen that the sole right of the Lord Jesus is incontestable and undisputed in the light of the throne of God. But the tears of John betray that his faith is feeble, like as it had before been in chapter i. 17. For God, in this illustrious way, was giving proof of that which was all John's delight, viz.: that none but Jesus can be the channel of blessing to any one from God.

By one of the elders instructing John, we perceive that the church's portion is to be in the secret of

God, and that nothing of God's counsels concerning the glory of His Son shall be hidden from it. (See, too, vii. 13.) This elder directs John's attention to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David: titles of the Lord Jesus, by which are indicated that God has yet a King in reserve for this world, and withal, how great a Being that King is! Previously this holy One had conquered in His strife with darkness, and with its prince. But on the cross, and in His resurrection, He did not follow up His victory, in so far as then to assert in power His claim to earth. In order that we who are called with a heavenly calling might share with Him in His rejection by the world, as well as in His acceptance before God, He waited until in every way possible we had been associated with Himself, and thus might be His co-heirs in His kingdom. But now, His church having already, ere this scene in chap. v., been removed to heaven, and the challenge as to worthiness for the kingdom having been so publicly made, the pause ere He responds must have a limit. So now the obscurity about the divine throne, such as had been the case in the view in chap. iv., begins to be dispelled, and the seer looks, and in the centre of that throne, and in the midst of the church he describes a once slain Lamb. By this title His wondrous worthiness is at once suggested. He who, in His witness for God, in His obedience to God, and in His

love of His Father, had surrendered all, even unto His life itself, is surely the rightful One who, in resurrection, should have all handed over to Him. But not His personal worthiness only have we here ; but also ours in Him. For that name of His, to wit, the Lamb, is His marriage name. (xix. 7.) It is to Him, as the Lamb, that we, when sinners, first were attracted, and by the blood of Whom we were finally made victors, (xii. 11.) And oh ! who can tell the glory of being brethren of the only worthy One, and of His worthiness being ours, too, through grace. Personally, ever was He worthy ; but officially, He is now worthy as the slain Lamb. Besides which, having symbolically seven horns and seven eyes—omnipotence and omniscience—He has all the requisites in full for the administration of the kingdom according to God. See 2 Chron. xvi. 9, with Zech. iii. 10 and iv. 10, in explanation of these “ seven eyes ; ” and also see Habakkuk iii. 4, about the “ horns,” or coruscations of light. Wonderful, too, it is to observe from this last passage, that it is in the hands once pierced that the power specially resides.

And now the period has at length quite arrived for Him, as the Lamb, to make His formal claim of His earthly inheritance. Accordingly, by His advance to the throne, He prefers His claim, and by the scroll being handed to Him by the Throne-Sitter,

God makes manifest His admission of that claim, and His holy and sovereign appointment of earth's King. Now Jesus our Lord is duly appointed King. Here is the moment contemplated in Luke xix. 12. In the far off country, He has received the kingdom. Now must His dominion stretch from shore to shore. Now must He reign until every opposing power has been subdued. Hence it is, that throughout the rest of this book, the Lamb is ever associated with God, as in vii. 10; xxi. 22; xxii. 1. The expression, "Throne of God and of the Lamb," assumes that matters have begun to be established on a redemption basis.*

Now, when that action of taking the book has been completed by Christ,† He has touched a chord that thrills through creation. The church feels it first; but all are affected; outwards and downwards, all in their measure are moved by it, all taking their

* With the sovereignty handed over to Christ so publicly, and yet so solemnly, by God, the reader will do well to contrast Satan's offer to the Lord in Matt. iv. 8. Also let him reflect how many have clutched eagerly at power and rule; but cared not as to how they got them.

† In Psalm xxiv. 7, there is an answer to the question as to who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord on the ground of righteousness. Entrance is demanded at the city gates in the name of the King of Glory, and then the sudden announcement is made that that King is at hand.

cue, as well as they can, from the new leaders of heaven's praise, the church of God. These, overpowered with joy, fall down before the Lamb, and praise Him on harps not made by human skill, and present the prayers of His earthly people, that His interference may be speedy on their behalf, (v. 8, with viii. 3—5.) How near to their Lord this action of theirs proves them to be !

Themselves accompanying their harps of divine workmanship, 'these sing, one and all. Not one incompetent or silent then ! The great secret of skilfulness in music is, that the whole soul shall flow out in it. Who can tell how much *each one* of these will feel, when in resurrection they see Him for themselves, and perceive clearly all that He has done for them. Oh, what strains of enrapturing music, to which nothing like has ever yet been heard ! For it is a new song that they sing : one, even as their theme is one. Now this word, "a new song," looks back to the old song, viz., to creation's song. This, as they witnessed that work of God, the angels sang. Of that old creation, these were the heads, and the acknowledged sons of God. But creation is a wreck. Sin has marred it. Its corner-stone was creature goodness. (Job xxxviii. 6, 7 ; Gen. i. 31.) That stone has been shivered to fragments. So God has had to begin again. And now, instead of mere creative power, we have redemption and resurrection.

And redemption song is the new song. In this praise the divine Redeemer Himself first led, when He came forth from the grave. (Ps. xl. 3.) Then, after Him, the first-fruits of God's creatures, in the new order of things, viz., the church of the First-born, take up this song. But in that He saith a new song, He hath made the first old. Its notes are drowned now in those new ones, which are so much better. Angels sing not now. They cannot! Their praise, their ardour is not intelligent nor extatic enough. They can only learn God's grace and glory at all by observing it in His kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus.

The key-note of this new song, is, "THOU art worthy!" This book tells specially of four things—of evil, of conflict, of victory, and of the kingdom. Here Christ has conquered, *ἐνίκησεν*. (v.5.) If we at all are conquerors, it is only through Him that loved us. Here creature-goodness is unthought of, and has been exposed. Now God has the ground all to Himself, to display Himself on. All here is made to depend on the worthiness of Himself alone. This Corner-Stone, this Rock, is immovable and steadfast for ever! Now God is going to bless His own according to what He is; never any more according to what creatures are. And now we are learning the ways of grace, and should seek to be established in grace. Grace is God dealing with us solely on account of

what He is, and in the measure of what He is according to His own estimate thereof. Glory only differs from grace, in that then we ourselves perceive what that estimate is. God now knows the worthiness of Christ, and correspondingly blesses us. This is grace. Presently we shall ourselves see the worthiness of Christ in God's own light. This is glory.

Only as yet we are not looking for Christ to take the book of His earthly inheritance. Something anterior thereto is our first hope, viz., His coming to receive us to Himself. Then will follow Christ's investiture with the kingdom, and our reign with Him. The angels, dazzled with the display of glory, and incompetent to deal with the question of sin in judgment, as Christ is, and as in a sense, sinners saved by His blood are, retire into an outer circle, and praise God in far feebler measure. Every creature (except the lost) adds its own pæan. For whilst Christ is destined by God to be Lord in three spheres, to wit, "in heaven," and "on earth," and "under the earth," (Philipp. ii.); only two of these are to be reconciled, viz.: "earth," and "heaven." (Coloss. i. 20.) Then, when the praise has resounded through creation, the church (note ver. 14) completes, and backs, and closes it.

LECTURE VI.

CHAPTER VI.—THE FIRST SERIES OF HARDENING JUDGMENTS ON CHRIST'S FOES.

WE have now witnessed in chapter v. the Lamb's formal and public appointment as God's King. We have seen that His righteous claims to earth's and to creation's sovereignty, have been acknowledged by God and by all around His throne. As yet down there in the world His foes are in fancied security. Possibly they have not yet done with their laughter and their scorn in their newspapers, and periodicals, and pulpits, at the disappearance of His faithful few. Beyond the throne of God assuming a new form, and dressing itself for judgment in chapter iv., not a whisper of what is coming on the earth has yet been heard. No unfolding of yonder book now in the hands of the Crucified can there be, until all and everything has been perfectly established around the throne. So, whilst the tide of wrath rises from that throne, and sweeps along till not a mountain-top remains uncovered, nor a single false principle nor daring foe

is left unjudged, our part, in view of all—as here we see is taught us—is to sit and sing before God.

Hitherto judgment is among God's hid treasures. Longsuffering and patience have been shown to perfection. But now at last the period has arrived for the Lamb to turn His attention towards His foes. What though they be counted by millions here! How little weight this must have, even on the mind of any one of us who has surveyed the scene in chapter v. ! What though these millions, or many of them, be potent for position, for influence, for talent, or for satire! What though the organized hosts of infidelity and of superstition—on the one hand, the Gibbons, the Voltaires, the Renans; and on the other, the multitudes of professors with their hollow friendship—be all, in very deed, leagued against Him! What though democracy, with its surging fierceness, and aristocracy with its haughty superciliousness, unite in chorus to say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us!" What though the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Messiah! These all are but bruised reeds for impotence, and but smoking flax as to their wrath; with whom He had not cared previously to cope, because the hour of judgment had not then struck. So, for instance, when on earth He had meekly retired, when the Pharisees conspired together

against Him.* But it is quite otherwise now! "He is not afraid of their voice, nor will He abase Himself for the noise of them:" (Isaiah xxxi. 4.) And this leads me to call attention to a key-word or two, which we find frequently used in this and subsequent chapters; and which, when their point is noted, will prove a valuable aid to any one in arriving at sound principles in the interpretation of this solemn book.

The Greek term that in this Revelation is translated Lamb, is only, when used of Christ, to be found in this single book of Scripture. Thus, it is another word that the Spirit of God has made use of in the gospel of John, as in chap. i. 29. There the word is rightly rendered "Lamb." But the exact translation of the word used through-

* Matthew xii. 20, cited from Isaiah xlii. 3.—The true meaning of this passage, "The bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench," is seldom perceived. Generally it is interpreted of God's mercy. This is then a specimen as to how unscripturally the love of God has been preached by many. And the church is suffering for this onesidedness in her testimony in such pernicious doctrines as that of annihilation is, and with which she has in consequence now to contend. The actual teaching of this Scripture, is found, by contrast, in verses 13 and 14 of the same chapter, (Isaiah xlii.) Also in verse 4, it is said of the Lord, "HE shall not dimly burn," (i.e., in *His* wrath); "nor be broken," (i.e., not be like them in their impotence.)

out Revelation, is rather "Little Lamb." There must be some reason for this singular change of term. Nor is that reason far to seek, if the sentiment in the paragraph preceding be received. The purport of this expression is somewhat like the thought in 1 Cor. i., where it is said, "The weakness of God is stronger than man." Heaven is about to engage in battle with earth. And the putting forth of heaven's power, all of it, is scarcely required. One hand, aye, or "the part of a hand," as Belshazzar, king of Babylon, was fain to admit, was enough to appal him, stout-hearted and intoxicated with worldly glory as he was. (Daniel v.5.) Also, at a later period, when earth's might, represented by the Roman band keeping guard around the tomb where Christ had lain—that might melted away into abject terror at the bare sight of a solitary angel. That perhaps was the chief occasion, when the outstanding sentinels of the two hosts of earth and of heaven came nearest to collision. Satan long before had rebelled against God's purpose as to this wondrous Man, and the world in addition had now rejected *such* a Man. Still the Crucified must reign! Every knee shall bow to Him. But then, we repeat, judgment time had not nearly arrived.

The horse, too, in this and the following chapters, is the war-horse, and represents defiance. As we get on with this book, this will be abundantly evident.

At the opening of the first Seal, the horse is white ; the defiance is more specious and covert. The rider on the first horse merely apes Christ, in the manner in which at length the Lord will come down, also seated on a white horse. (xix. 11.) Some have hesitated as to whether the rider on the first horse here embodied an evil principle. But of this there need be no reasonable doubt. That the rider in verse 2 is anti-christian, is evident in that (1) he is challenged by the first cherub ; (2) he is connected with the other riders in the following verses ; (3) he mimics Christ ; (4) he descends not from heaven ; and (5) there is no description of this rider, as there is of Christ, in xix. The idea in these horses following one after another, is as if the first dared to advance towards Christ, some part of the intermediate way, to engage in war with Him, and then, unable to advance further, disappeared to make room for one bolder. Only, in all this it must be borne in mind, that this is a symbolic vision, and represents the defiance in the hearts of men as beginning at last to assume full form and shape, when once the church has been taken home, and when God has commenced to harden men's hearts, preparatory to their being trampled under Christ's feet when He presently descends.

It is important to observe, that these horses and their riders do not either advance or even appear,

until the cry from the cherub has been sounded, "Come."* That is to say, the cry is causative. The latent infidelity and hostility to God of the human heart, are hereby evoked and brought to the surface. The judgments on men, symbolized by what ensues on the opening of the Seals, we shall just now see to be solely providential ones on God's part. And His design in these, and in those of the Trumpets, and in those of the Vials, is quite to harden His foes for the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Thus did it fare with Pharaoh and with his hosts of old. Then, when they are perfectly maddened with rage against Him, even to the defying Him to His very face, He will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. But it is only at the close of the third, that is, of the last series of judgments, viz., of the Vials, that men will have been goaded on to that horrible extreme of impiety. (See xvi. 14, 16; xvii. 14; xix. 19.) At the close of the second series of judgments, to wit, of the Trumpets, Christ's foes have not yet arrived at that pitch of frenzy; they appear simply to be sullen and hardened only into stolid indifference. See ix. 20, 21, where the allusion to the plagues on Pharaoh is certain. Whilst at the close of the first

* *ερχου*. The other words, *και βλεπε*, "and see," all the critical editors omit. They were obviously inserted by the copyists, who understood not the force of the word "Come."

series of judgments, that is to say, of the Seals, so far are His foes then from being quite hardened, that they are seen in actual trepidation; and their vain shriek to the rocks to fall upon them, and their mistaken supposition that the great day of His wrath had quite come, augur that a particle of fear of Him yet lingers in their breasts. Thus, the three series of hardening judgments, of Seals, of Trumpets, and of Vials, all are required ere He Himself shall come down and personally engage in the fray!

If any one is inclined to start with surprise at the gracious Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, so finally trampling on His foes as the winepress of the wrath and fury of Almighty God, and so in preparation perfectly hardening them, let such an one remember that it is the way of God to visit upon men living, at the close of a dispensation, all the sins of all their forefathers. (Matt. xxiii. 35.) Then let such remember further, how the world's guilt has culminated in every way and feature possible, and how grace, perfect grace, has been scorned and utterly rejected;—grace, whether as revealed by Christ when in the flesh and on the earth Himself, or whether as preached again with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—let such recall to mind the history of the past eighteen centuries, with the forbearance of God on the one hand, and the apostasies of Christendom on the other:—and then he will, if he knows God, perceive

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that though His vengeance may slumber for a while, and judgment tarry ; yet at the last He will and must speak out, and His righteousness must make a clean sweep of all ungodliness from off the earth. And in these three series of preparatory judgments, you have the way disclosed in which He will begin to set about it. One might, in short, say that whilst to take possession of His heavenly inheritance, the Lord makes His own loved ones willing and obedient ; in order to take possession of His earthly kingdom, He makes His foes a stool on which heavily He may plant His foot. And specially in view of the three successive series of judgments, (Seals, and Trumpets, and Vials), we may perceive that whilst God's way, during the period that He is showing grace, is, if men will not hear, to proceed from a greater miracle to a less* ; when He is dealing in judgment, His miracles of wrath proceed from less to greater. For judgment is His strange work, which He is slow to execute ; but grace is what He takes pleasure in showing to those who will have it.

Hence, to get at the main lesson taught us in the

* So Christ first fed five thousand with five loaves ; and then, on a subsequent occasion, four thousand with seven loaves. (Mark viii. 1.) Then, again, in verse 22, He heals a blind man slowly, and as if with more effort. So the Judges were raised up with increasing reserve. Slighted mercy is sensitive.

account of any one of the three series of judgments, whether of Seals, or of Trumpets, or of Vials, our attention must be particularly directed to the last of that series, that is to say, to the fifth and sixth Seals ; for the seventh Seal is, as will presently appear, the same as the entire series of seven Trumpets ; and to the fifth and sixth Trumpets, for the seventh Trumpet is likewise identical with the entire series of the seven Vials ; and to the sixth and seventh Vials. I mean, that in each of these series, the climax of the set of judgments, is in the last one or two of each set. Accordingly, as regards the Seals, to the crash seen to follow on the opening of the sixth Seal, the judgments of the five preceding ones have each and all tended. I do earnestly beg the reader to ponder the above line of thought. Otherwise, instead of watching intently as the series or chain of judgments proceed in successive developement, until the final climax is reached, it may be that he will allow his mind to be drawn away to that which comparatively is of trifling moment, as of the minor details in those judgments. Thus with many it has happened, specially with such as Elliott and Cumming ; the ingenuity has been kept in exercise, instead of the Divine principles of interpretation being grasped and having their due weight in the soul. Little prettinesses and guesses have been indulged in, and readers have been amused, instead of souls being led to watch with reverence

and awe at the unfoldings of divine judgment. Then it will be seen that the drift of the entire series of judgments of the Seals, is to be found in the catastrophe of the sixth.

But first look for a moment at the preceding five Seals. A main clue as to what those judgments are, and as to their operation in the commencement by God in hardening men, so as to goad them to the battle with Himself, when His Son shall ultimately appear,—this clue might even be found in the color of these horses. The reader will easily see that some emphasis is in our chapter thrown on this variety in their several colors. We have already above touched upon the signification of the first, or white horse. The second, third, and fourth horses, are respectively, red, and black, and “green,”* and signify war, and famine, and pestilence. For the general details accompanying the account of each successive horse and its rider, will be found to confirm the above interpretation. Thus, under the second Seal there appears a red horse. Then, in explanation, it is added, that a great sword is given to the rider, peace being withdrawn from the earth, and men slaying each other. Again, under the third Seal, when there appears a black

* *χλωρος*, green. Probably our translators altered the word to “pale,” on account of there not being such a thing in nature as a green horse.

horse, the rider has a pair of balances in his hand. Also a direction is heard from within the four cherubim, to the effect that corn shall be so far scarce, that one man's labour for a day shall provide himself alone with bread for that day. Other necessary articles it is implied are scarce too.* Once more, under the fourth Seal appears a "green" horse, and death and hades follow its rider. All this evidently represents pestilence slaying its thousands. A simple interpretation of symbolic imagery, is safer and surer than a strained and forced one. And this interpretation hangs together. It is likely, that after war there would be famine, and after famine, pestilence. These judgments, which Christ, and His church administering under Him, will begin to inflict when once He has taken the book, seem to be of a much commoner sort than those that presently follow. Only, doubtless, they will be of a severer kind than any of those which men even now-a-days are heard to complain of. Besides which, there can

* The penny was the labouring man's daily wage. (See Matt. xx. 2.) And the chænix signifies as much as was sufficient for one man for one day. A chænix of corn was allowed to each man in Xerxes army, according to Herodotus. Its weight was between two and three pounds. If, when it is added, "See thou hurt not the oil and the wine," the interpretation is preferred of these being left uninjured; then we see the reluctance of God to proceed to extremities.

be no doubt that a wonderful parallel exists here in this symbolic prophecy, with that at the beginning of Matt. xxiv. And this parallel again serves to clinch the interpretation, so far as we have yet gone, as accurate. For there Christ warns that a sign of the end of the age will be, many coming in His name, representing themselves to be the Messiah=Seal i. Next, He states that they shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, and that nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom=Seal ii. The Lord places as what will ensue next, famine=Seal iii. After which, we have pestilences and earthquakes=Seal iv. "All these," He adds, "are the beginning of sorrows." He informs us what will come to pass next. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake." Now compare with this what we have in our chapter, which we are considering in verses 9—11, and see whether it tallies not perfectly with the account of what ensues under the FIFTH SEAL. For so we read: "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 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." Here observe how different is all this cry of these martyrs, from the song of the glorified church in chap. v. In fact, this is not at all, and never could be, the cry of Christians. For it is not the way of God's Spirit in Christians, to lead them to supplicate for vengeance on their foes. But it will be the way of that Spirit in another people, whom God will acknowledge as His, when once the parenthesis of His dealings with His church here has been closed by the rapture. (See Psalms lxxix. and lxxxiii.) In the vision these are represented as seen by the seer as disembodied spirits, as those who have lost their mortal lives for the testimony that they held. And by these being directed in patience to wait until their fellow-servants and their brethren shall have been killed, as they have been; in other words, until the last tribulation has set in, and been passed through by those who shall suffer under it; and which tribulation is, as it were, brewing by this process of the Seals, in hardening the hearts of men to defy God, and to attempt to stamp out from the earth the very names of God and of His Messiah—by this direction of these His martyred servants, to wait a while until the suffering of their fellow-servants is past also, these sufferers under this fifth

Seal are shown to have their reward presently in Christ's EARTHLY kingdom, even as those will who will come out of the great tribulation. For, ere aught of this comes to pass, the heavenly calling is completely closed. I mean that the two classes, both of those who suffer under the fifth Seal, and also of those who experience the fierceness of men's hate against God during the great tribulation: these two classes are so far put together as to show, that if the latter find their place, as we shall abundantly see they do by and bye in the kingdom, when it is set up in power down here; so will these former too, viz., those that quickly suffer for God after the removal of the church. In fact, these two classes are put together, though carefully distinguished each from the other in chapter xx. 4. There we read first of the enthroned church, and then of two other classes, to wit, of "the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God," namely, the sufferers under this fifth Seal, and who, as we in addition are here informed, will lose their lives by being beheaded; and then again of the second class, who refused to worship the beast and his image, in other words, who suffer in the great tribulation. Here we have the church, or "the saints of the high places," taking the kingdom and possessing it, even for ever and ever. (Daniel vii. 18.) Then the other two classes, the sufferers under the fifth Seal, and

those subsequently during the great tribulation, are those together comprehended in Daniel vii. 27, who get the "kingdom UNDER the whole heaven." Nor must we omit to mention, that by the order in which these judgments under the second, third, fourth, and fifth Seals, is specified as thus, war, famine, pestilence, and A persecution raised against many of Christ's servants; it is surely suggested that men will blame Christ's witnesses as the cause of those sorrows, and in consequence wreak their rage upon them. How these became converted after the church's removal, we are not informed. We know, of course, that conversion will ever be necessary for Christ's kingdom, either in its aspect heavenwards or earthwards. (John iii. 8.) And we also know, that though the Holy Spirit will personally have departed from the earth with the church, as Eliezer with Rebecca, still He will be present down here by His influences, even as was the case of old with the patriarchs, before He personally came down at Pentecost. Peradventure these witnesses for the Lord will have been impressed with the solemn fact of the disappearance of all the Christians, and begin to surmise as to what that disappearance is to be attributed to. Anyhow, this we know, that when the Spirit, Who now by His presence hinders the full developement of the apostasy, has taken His departure with the church

from this world, the strong delusion of the last days will set in upon apostate Christendom. Whence it might seem to follow, that rather from the heathen and other nations, who have heard little or nothing of God's true gospel, and notably from Israel, will these servants of Christ be taken, than from those nations who have deliberately rejected it. The above also seems the thought in Luke xiii. 25—29, and Matthew vii. 22, 23.

Then comes the sixth Seal—the crash, the *melee*, the anarchy in old Christendom, for which the hardening judgments of the other Seals have been preparing men. Here surely we have a state of things predicted, which seems, divested of symbol, already to have found a feeble earnest in some small measure in the French revolution of 1791. The passage predicts the upsetting of thrones; the apostasy from the Name of Christ of multitudes of professors, and specially, as will appear directly, of numbers of the clergy. Democracy, even now ill-restrained by the forces employed to control it, will at last burst all barriers, and begin to introduce a new state of things; which, under the first four Trumpets, will have become perfected, and make this earth a pandemonium itself. But there I am slightly anticipating. So let us look at the inspired words of the judgment ensuing, on the opening of the sixth Seal.

“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. 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?"

It is not stated in this quotation of the terrified shriek of these men, that the great day of His wrath had indeed come. The statement is that these said so. The upset was so great, the catastrophe so widespread in its range, that they who had any natural fear of God imagined that He could not be silent any longer. But they were mistaken, as the sequel proves. All these are but the beginning of sorrows. The judgments of the Trumpets, and of the Vials, remain yet to come, ere He will Himself interfere. Men shall have a taste of the reign of the Beast, as they have refused the benign sway of the Lamb. Nor are these men yet wholly hardened. They still talk of the day of His wrath, as if they had a few

relics of their old creed ; which, probably ere Christ had risen up and shut to the door by the rapture of the church, they had, week after week, repeated in their public devotions. And if any one should object, and say, " Surely the imagery is too bold and grand for to warrant its application to any crisis short of the actual appearing of the Lord," I can only reply, that such a style is frequent in the Old Testament prophets, from whom the language may have been taken. And there this kind of symbol is used, even in reference to events of minor importance than that to which it is believed here to refer. Thus, see for instance, Jeremiah iv. 23 to 31, and Hosea x. 8. And in fact we may assert that the day of the Lord is about actually to dawn. For the very few years (not many more than seven) in the course of which the judgments recorded in this book are to come to pass, previous to His own interposition, resemble the cold dark hour just before the break of day. And since these are the circumstances, which, with others more awful still, are to usher in that day, no wonder that the terms used look onwards to that day itself.

Now, if we would look beneath the surface of the symbols a little, they will not be found difficult to interpret ; though the interpretation be indeed a solemn one. Let us begin with the falling of the stars. As to what is signified by the stars, we need not be, and ought not to be in any manner of doubt.

Already we have been told that the stars are the angels of the churches, (i. 20.) After the removal of the true believers to their heavenly home, much the same ritual will obtain in the various congregations of Christendom. The bells will summon the worshippers, and these will assemble and go through similar ceremonies as before. The only differences will be, that the Holy Ghost will have lifted away the church, and the heavenly call will be over and the door shut. But when calamities thicken on the earth, as we have seen by the first five Seals will be the case—and war, and famine, and pestilence follow one upon another, and of a direr sort than ever before—and when the nations are enraged, and begin to persecute any in whom the Spirit by His influences has begun to work, so that divers are slain—and when priests and preachers realise in their own souls how they have been disowned by being left behind, and are left to the pity and to the scorn of those whom they deluded—no wonder if a rapid apostasy all over Christendom shall begin to set in. So these clergy and wicked shepherds in multitudes will abandon their useless profession, as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs when shaken by a great wind. And this apostasy will be much helped on by the upheaval of society, and the beginning of the utter capsize of all that order which the children of men for their own comfort now so earnestly desire.

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Yet this too, by all fair analogy, and by the laws of homogeneity, must be the interpretation of the obscuration of the sun and moon—the civil and religious world-powers—and by the great earthquake. But on these matters we shall have further to speak, when we come to the trumpets; which, as already asserted, will be found to be the seven parts of the seventh Seal.

Hence we learn that what the nations of the world are even now dreading, will actually come to pass. And the tendencies of many of the politicians at this present time, (and notably of the “frogs,” or stump orators, xvi. 13), are undoubtedly towards this very end. And then, as we learn from chap. xiii. of this book, from the utter disorganization of society, and the political chaos to which the nations of the world will arrive, thence will arise the Beast and his ten subordinate kings, elected by universal suffrage, who will make short work indeed of all the Christianity that is left, (xvii. 16—18.) And thus will be introduced THE GREAT TRIBULATION. Here I am again anticipating; but it is helpful to throw out suggestions by the way, as to how the several chapters and the events that they pourtray, are connected together.

We have now endeavoured, as briefly as possible, to sketch the judgments of the first six Seals. And it is a most solemn spectacle to perceive, that like as when God poured out His judgments upon Egypt of old, it was at Egypt's religion and Egypt's gods,

against whom those judgments were specially levelled; so here we begin to perceive, that when the living God again speaks out, His judgments shall come down notably on the idols and the little antichrists of the apostasy. Religious men may defend, and love, and glory in their disobedience to the written Word of God. But He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity has revealed His will. Happy is it for us if we implicitly obey Him. From His Word He cannot recede!

The scene in the chapter closes with a prayer-meeting, attended by very many. Distinguished folks are there too in plenty. Their prayers are hearty and importunate. But they are not to God; nor are those prayers heard. Then shall come to pass the word that is written, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." (Proverbs i. 24—26; Psalm ii. 12.)

How very awful is the subject of their prayer—to be hid from His face. Why to see His face is the very *summum bonum* prayed for by His saints! How great the divergence between the two classes! What hath grace wrought! Also these unhappy souls add, Who can stand in such a day? But the church, as we have seen, can sit at this time. Thus the contrast between the saved and the lost is complete.

LECTURE VII.

CHAP. VII.—NOT A HAIR OF THEIR HEAD SHALL PERISH.

See Jeremiah xxx. 7.

THE first series of hardening judgments on the foes of Christ, is at length passed ! Their issue in the incipient disintegration of society, in the subversion of all order, and of beneficial human law, together with the rapid spread of apostasy from the name of Christ, of multitudes of religious teachers we have beheld ; their effect on men in general, in the consternation with which they regard the future, we have had traced for us. Oh ! if men's hearts even now, notably, sometimes fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, what will be the condition of things down here, when the Hinderer of all this has departed with the Church, and when the Son of Man has arisen to shake terribly the earth ? Yet, in no time of this world's history, however dark it may become, will God be without His own witnesses. And throughout the awful period down here, intervening between the removal of the Church, on the one hand, and the appearing of Christ to the world on the other, during which the Lord will be conducting those plagues on

men, which shall eventuate in their being goaded to frenzy in rage and hate against God, still a remnant shall be reserved to hope in His mercy. Specially will this be the case with Israel. The mass of this nation, according to the flesh, will, with all others, worship the Beast (Rev. xiii.) and his image, when set up in the holy place. (Dan. xi. 36; Matt. xxiv. 15.) But a comparative few, who will form the nucleus of the new Israel, through faith in their Messiah, shall persistently cling to Him. It had been well had the nation received Him when He came before. True, God had had His deeper counsels of grace, in His kindness to us by Christ Jesus, and which He brought forth and accomplished, when men murdered His beloved Son. Still, since that Son was not at all the sort of king which His nation desired, therefore they must experience somewhat of the ways of him that they in their hearts preferred. (John v. 43). Thus will the tearful eye of some be directed towards Him who will come and save them. Notwithstanding, this feeble folk, together with a great multitude from other nations too, will be exposed in their witness for God, to the unmitigated wrath of the Beast and of his confederate kings, during the last three and a half years, just before the Lord Jesus descends. (Dan. ix. 27.) For, inasmuch as the other two series of judgments (of Trumpets and of Vials), about to be poured out upon the world, will only serve to exasperate Christ's

foes to all possible fury, against everything of His ; therefore the trial of His own earthly people will be sorer far than ever has been the case in any former age of the world. (Dan. xii. 1 ; Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.)

How beautiful, therefore, is this picture here in our chapter afforded us of the watchful care of God and of Christ, towards those who must experience and go through this "tribulation, the great one." How beautiful, too, that this solicitude is recorded, not after the trial is all past, but even before it has commenced. For the sufferers under the fifth Seal are, as we have seen, not in THE great tribulation : when those suffer, the Beast has not yet appeared to tyrannize with despotic cruelty over the world. The trial which these sufferers underwent, was but the prelude to the great tribulation, then presently to set in. Hence we can now perceive the main design of this chapter, and why it is in this place. In the following chapters we read of the judgments of the Trumpets ; but before the wicked are further infuriated against God, the predestinating love of God towards His own, and His shepherd-like numbering of them all, we have in inimitable outline set before us. Then in chap. xiv. 1—7, after the tribulation is over, these identical people, viz : the hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel, and also the multitude that no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, saved through the preaching of the everlasting gospel, by which

they are led to fear God and give glory to Him, and consequently refusing this worship to the Beast—these all, in their two distinct companies of Israelite and Gentile, are there to be descried again. Only in this chap. vii, the view of these victors is prospective, and in xiv. it is retrospective. And we may add, if, as we perceive, God is so careful of these His earthly saints, whose names were written in the Slain Lamb's book of life FROM the foundation of the world, (Rev. xiii. 8, Matt. xxv. 84), how much more must the eye of God ever be upon us, and the arm of God ever be around us, His heavenly people, whom He loved BEFORE the world began. (Eph. i. 4; 2 Tim. i. 9; Titus i. 2.) And therefore, though the account in this chapter is, as we proceed to show, only indirectly applicable to us; yet may we most certainly argue herefrom, as to the daily loving-kindness of GóD toward ourselves, that "not a single shaft can hit, till," and so far only as, "the God of love sees fit." All the devices of the enemy, all the sorrows of the way, He knows; whatever may happen, all is ordered, numbered, measured by His pierced hand! all shall work together for good! no one is able to separate us from Christ, or from the love of God for ever. Hence, whatever there is to be found of grace or of mercy in this chapter, and there is very much; yet may we most certainly say 'more than that, far higher than that, is our inalienable portion!'

Now that it is not the church of God which is represented by either of these two classes here in chapter vii. ; neither by the hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel, nor by the multitude that no man can number, gathered out of every nation, and standing before the throne—that in neither of these saved companies, nor in both together, is, strictly speaking, our own proper place, is perfectly evident from many considerations. Thus, firstly, we have here the distinction drawn very plainly between Jew and Gentile, and the Jew obtains the front place. But there is nothing of all this in the Church of God. Quite the contrary. The glorified Man in God, to Whom by the Holy Ghost we are united, is so our peace, as that, among other matters, “He hath made both (Jew and Gentile) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, for to make IN HIMSELF of twain one new man, making peace, reconciling both (Jew and Gentile) unto God,” insomuch that “we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” Thus now it is the will of God that we should be “*heirs together*, and a *body together*, and partakers *together* of His promise in Christ.” (Eph. ii. 14, 15, 16, 18; iii. 6). And of this one single body, He in resurrection is the all-glorious head. That is to say, it is through this union to Him, that we both (Jew and Gentile) are one body in Christ. But when once the Church has been taken home, the

Jews will come into prominence again in the dealings of God with this world. His ways with them will be resumed just where they were discontinued, by their rejection of their Messiah when on earth, and specially persisted in after the Lord's ascension, and after the Holy Ghost had come down to testify of His glory.

But this is not all the proof furnished by this chapter of those here being quite different in their position before God, to those who believe in Christ now. In fact, this very bad habit of seeing only one single class of redeemed, and of indiscriminately applying everything of blessing, whether in heaven or on earth, to that one class, arises from the believer forgetting that not he, but the Lord Jesus, is the centre of God's counsels; and that in Him the Church has her own heavenly place, and Israel and the spared ones of the nations their earthly place. These saved ones in chap. vii. are neither enthroned, as is the Church in chap. iv., nor have they crowns. Palms instead are in their hands.* What a vast difference is this! How much we lose from taking our eye off Christ, and from not perceiving that the glory of the celestial company is one, and the glory of the terrestrial company is another; though both through Christ alone, in Whom each of these perfectly distinct companies is to be headed up. (Eph. i. 10.) Again:

* See note to page 145, as to the signification of the contrast between the church's crowns and these sufferers' palms.

these are to "serve God in His temple"; but those that are victors *now*, are to be pillars of it, (chap. iii, 12); and all of them together, are the very temple itself. (Heb. iii. 6.) As to the Throne-Sitter, He dwells over (*ἐν αὐτοῖς*) these earthly saints, and they "*stand*" before Him. But the Church is to sit down with Him, (chapter iii. 21; Eph. ii. 6,) and will already have been brought by matchless grace to this extreme exaltation, ere aught recorded in this chapter takes place at all. (See notes on chaps. iv. and v.) When there is mention, too, of the service of song, it is obviously as suggestive of the highest ecstasy. Contrary to general sentiment, we dare to assert that only once throughout all Scripture are angels said to have expressed themselves in song. (Job. xxxviii. 6, 7.) The occasion of that song of theirs was when creation first came forth from its Maker's hands. But never more is their praise, however ardent, or however intelligent, termed a song. Thus, when the Lord came into the world, a multitude of the heavenly host was heard "praising God, and *saying*, Glory to God." (Luke ii. 13.) But now, those that can sing the new song, redemption's song, have, of course, a theme for praise infinitely more thrilling, more reverential and more joyful, than ever was known before. Hence, as we have already noted, the contrast marked between the "*singing*" of the Church of the first-born, and the "*saying*" of the

angels by their thousands many in chapter v. Well; here in chapter vii. we listen to the praise of this earthly company of God's redeemed. And not without design, surely, is it that that praise of theirs is called a "cry" or "shout," (*κραζοντες*) rather than a song; as if their joy, however great, was exceeded far by the joy of that other, the heavenly company of God's redeemed. If it be a song at all that they are said to sing, (for so it is indeed termed elsewhere) the term is still qualified by their song being spoken of as "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." The words of their song, too, triumphant as they are, are widely different from the words used to express the Church's ecstasy. (See chap. xv. 2—4, and compare chap. i. 5, 6, or v. 10.) And once more; whilst it is a distinct and definite promise to those who are His now, that they shall be kept even from the hour itself of the temptation which is coming upon all the world, (chap. iii. 10); here, on the contrary, as we are expressly informed, these "come out of the tribulation, the great one." Besides which, it is one of the elders who, as we have seen, represent the Church, that gives the information to John about these future out-comers from the tribulation. Clearly, therefore, the elders, that is to say, the Church, are a distinct company from those out-comers themselves, since the one company points to the other company, and discourses concerning it.

It was essential that the general bearing of this

chapter, its position to the chapters before and after, and the relation of these two classes of saints, Jew and Gentile, to the Church, and to the other servants of God, should be distinctly traced. Sufficient, I trust, has now been said to make these matters evident. The principles of interpretation of this book are those which it is my main endeavour to educe. Let these be well grasped, and then any ordinary reader will easily be able to follow throughout the inspired account for himself. The saints themselves, in this chapter vii., are undoubtedly those who will be saved out of the world during the great tribulation, and the Jewish part of which company are thrice spoken of as "elect" in Matt. xxiv. 22, 24, 31. Many features as to their faith, their witness, their sufferings, and their final victory, will be observed when we come to chapters xiv. and xv. For, as we have already remarked, those are there the identical classes of saints referred to after the tribulation is passed; as here they are secured and shown to be secured before that tribulation has set in. And, very properly, those peculiar characteristics of their painful confession are only descanted on, after that confession is completed, and after the victory has been won. In chapter vii. the picture is rather of electing love, or at least, of tender, watchful oversight.

It may be well here to remark, that every single

interposition of God in the behalf of His people during the continuance of the judgments of the Trumpets and Vials, is, if I mistake not, described as angelic. So it is here in chap. vii. 2, 3, again in chap. viii. 3, and again in chap. x. 1. I mean not only to say, that the service of created angels is made use of during these terrible judgments; but much more. Whenever the Lord Jesus Himself is spoken of as interfering, or ready to interfere throughout this said period for His earthly people, He too is, over and over again, referred to in His angelic character. Thus, there can be no doubt that He Who has the seal of the living God in chap. vii. 2, is the uncreated Angel of the covenant also. He Who in chap. viii. 3 presents the prayers of His earthly saints in His censer at the altar, is the same divine Being. And ample proof of this identity of this Personage in chap. x., we shall easily obtain, when we come to look at that chapter. The intelligent reader is aware, not only that our beloved Lord is often spoken of in this character in the Old Testament; but specially is this the case in those prophecies which speak of His future interposition in Israel's behalf. But it may be well, once for all, to go fully and carefully into the 'WHEREFORE' of these angelic appearances of the Lord Jesus in these chapters, viz., vii. 2; viii. 3; and x. 1.

When the Lord promised to Abraham, after he

had offered up Isaac, that his seed should be greatly multiplied, and should possess the gate of his enemies, it was in his character of Angel of the Lord that he did so, (Genesis xxii.) When Jacob invoked blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh, he invoked it of this "Angel," (Genesis xlviii. 16). When Israel was to be delivered from Egypt, this Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses at the bush, (Exodus iii.) When Israel had crossed the Jordan, and were encamped before Jericho, Joshua was instructed by Him who is here called the Captain of the Lord's host, as to how they were to compass the city; blowing trumpets for six days, and on the seventh day to compass it, blowing trumpets, seven times. So in this book of Revelation, the mystic Babylon is, as we shall see, in some sort also the anti-typical Jericho. It crumbles to pieces of its own corruption, through the providential judgments of the Seven Trumpets; the judgment of the last Trumpet being subdivided into that of the Seven Vials. Then as Israel was to shout on the seventh day, so the shout of that people again in triumph is heard in Rev. xix., "Hallelujah." Hence Christ's interference for Israel by and bye, is often spoken of in the prophets with an allusion to His angelic character. Notably is this the case in Malachi iii. 1.

But then, from the prophet Daniel we obtain much further clue as to the line of thought con-

veyed in this expression. I refer particularly to Daniel x., which at first sight is one of the most difficult chapters to understand in the entire Word of God. For there the wondrous Personage who then appeared to that prophet, and who, most surely, is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself, yet states that He was "helped" by "Michael your Prince." Moreover, is not this Michael Christ in His angelic character? Then are we drawn to enquire, Which of these two Personages in Daniel x. is the Lord Jesus? Whichever of the two we identify as He, involves us in difficulty as we read the chapter; for we are constrained to ask ourselves, Is not the other one the Lord? And thus there is perplexity upon perplexity, until it is remembered how full this prophet Daniel is of double symbolic visions. (See remarks on Rev. i. 5.) So will the thought arise in the mind, Here surely is another specimen of the same two-folded view of this one blessed and complex Being. Now that the man who appeared to Daniel "clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz, whose body was like the beryl, and His face as the appearance of lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, and His arms and His feet like in colour to polished brass, and the sound of whose words was like the voice of a multitude"—that this Person is Christ is certain from the allusion to this vision in John's account of Christ's appearance in

Rev. i. Yet Michael, who helped Him, also is Christ. (See Daniel xii. 1 ; Rev. xii. 7 ; Jude 9). Men may talk of archangel~~s~~ (in the plural) ; God never does. Only of one single Archangel does Scripture mention a word. There is some obscurity, also, in the authorized translation of Daniel x. 18 : " One of the chief princes," as if He were only one of several. But the margin gives here the correcter reading, viz. : " the first " of the chief princes.

Now the teaching of this most important chapter (Daniel x.) begins to be apparent. Those angelic princes, " the prince of Persia and the prince of Grecia " (ver. 20) who resisted the Lord, are evil angels ; for it would be incongruous to suppose one good angel opposing another ; much more for one such to oppose Christ Himself. They are probably some of those wicked spirits of whom we read in Ephesians vi., " the world rulers of this darkness." The Lord, in His aid vouchsafed to Daniel, and to the nation of that man greatly beloved, had been resisted by the angelic princes of the empires that rose successively upon the ruins of Judah's national glory. Satan and his angels would desire, that that people of Israel should ever continue in the dust of degradation. But the first of those four great Gentile monarchies, had at the time of this vision been overpowered, and its angel also. Hence it is that we read not a word in this chapter of the power of Babylon encountering

Israel's divine Friend. For at that time Persia was the ruling power in the world. But the Lord was going to fight with the prince of Persia, (ver. 20). After which, as He says, the angelic "prince of Grecia" would come to oppose Him in His sympathies with Israel. Then in the latter part of chap. xi., it is narrated how the Roman power should also eventually succumb. Then in chap. xii. there is the Lord Jesus, as "Michael that great Prince, which standeth for the children of thy people," standing up in their behalf. Then follows the mention of the time of sore trouble, of which we shall read so much in subsequent chapters of this Revelation.

There only remains to clear up, how the Lord Jesus required "help" (chapter x. 13) in His succouring of Israel. This is explained by the fact, that the sins of that nation were the true cause of their disgrace; and therefore only by Himself, in another character, abasing Himself to death, even the death of the cross, could He righteously stand up as their Friend. Their iniquities gave their enemies, both those visible and those invisible, the advantage over them. But when He had finished the transgression, and made an end of sin, then in resurrection at once could He have restored the kingdom to Israel. But that insensate nation, as we know, persisted in its blind refusal of Him. But here, at last, in the Revelation, the Church-call having in the interim

been perfectly completed, the period has all but arrived for Him at last to arise, and so interfere in power for that nation, as God in His prophets had repeatedly promised that He would do, and as in these chapters (Rev. vii. 2 ; viii. 8 ; and x. 1) we behold Him doing. Hence it is in perfect keeping with all that had been said of His coming forth as their Friend, Deliverer, and Saviour, that He in these chapters is thrice beheld in this mystic angelic guise.

And thus we obtain the clue to this representation of the Lord in this chapter. He is seen to be at work for Israel, and for those who fear God along with Israel, though during the period comprised in these providential judgments of the Trumpets and Vials, in a manner invisible to them. The time has not arrived for His appearing in Person in their favour ; but yet in providence and in grace, He is engaged in their behalf. The seal with which He marks His own in their foreheads, may remind us of that mark put upon the foreheads of those faithful ones of an earlier time, who had wept for the abominations committed. (Ezek. ix. 4.) It also is in direct contradistinction to the mark which the Beast will impose upon all his adherents (Rev. xiii. 16) ; and thus the contrast of the two marks furnishes us with further evidence, that those here sealed by the Lord Jesus are identical with those Israelites who refuse to worship the Beast and his image, and who suffer in consequence. And

we learn, by implication, that the strength of these to endure and to hope in God throughout that terrible time coming, will be entirely due to His grace being in their hearts. At the same time, there is one important difference as respects the sealing of those saints then, and to the seal with which we Christians are sealed now. For at present it is the Holy Ghost Himself, who is both the seal and the earnest of our inheritance; that is to say, who takes possession of us on the part of God, and who gives us a foretaste—yea, is Himself that very foretaste of our heavenly blessing. With Israel the Spirit will not be present in Person, but only by His influences, so as He was with the saints before Pentecost. Then, again, the service of the four angels holding the four winds, is evidently of a providential sort. The dread time of trial is staved off, until a remnant is endued with divine strength to confess God, and their hope in Messiah. But further instruction on this point we shall obtain in the next chapter.

Next here we see, that when Israel's time of blessing is approaching, the Lord will know where to find each one of all the lost tribes; hidden as they are now in God's hand, the attempts of men to discover or to identify them, are all futile and puerile. They are not however, we see here, lost to Him. The two sticks, the one for Judah and the other for Joseph, shall yet be joined together. (Ezek. xxxvii. 16, 17).

The two kingdoms shall again become one, Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

On the peculiar specification, or on the arrangement of the several tribes in this chapter, I need not say much. Noticeably, Judah, the royal tribe, stands first. Why there are twelve thousand of it, and of each of the other eleven tribes mentioned, I am not certain; but I give my opinion: I think this number is in continued allusion to the Tabernacle and Temple of old. We have already looked at the throne in the holiest, and at the entire heavenly priesthood seated before God. Also we have beheld the contrast to the brazen laver, in the sea of glass, like unto crystal, though now in a new position, and the reason thereof. We have seen, too, why the candlestick differed in one most striking and important particular to that which Bezaleel made. For then the centre stem was visible; but now, as the candlestick is outside for testimony, that Centre is invisible. Again, in chap. vi. there is reference to the altar of burnt offering, and in chap. viii. to the altar of incense; but the table of shewbread had a glance at Israel; for twelve loaves were put upon the table, in representation of the twelve tribes. Hence they appear here again in their perfect number, as twelve. And in order that this perfectness may be the more impressed upon us, the number of each tribe sealed is exactly

so many thousands. And therefore we see that, without one exception, unless it be the Vail, which has been rent ; every single piece of the furniture of the Tabernacle finds its counterpart here. And so we have another proof afforded to us of the fact, though disputed by some, because the striking contrast of the candlestick now and of old interferes, as to its doctrine, with their theory of church organization, that the ground plan of the scenery in the Revelation is a holy chamber ; even such an one as that wherein of old Jehovah dwelt. *

But the seer's attention is specially directed by one of the elders, who represent the Church, and which has the mind of Christ, to the grand prophetic truth, that though Israel shall yet be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, the world also shall be blessed at the same time ; still, each of these, Jew and Gentile, only through dire judgments. A nucleus of each nation † is to be preserved from worshipping the Beast, since such worship would entail everlast-

* I have not room for any annotations on the tribes as they are mentioned here. Simeon was much slighted of old, through that tribe's leading in the sin with the Midianites. (Num. xxv.) Here, however, we see that it is not forgotten. Dan, indeed, does not appear here, still, from Ezekiel xlviii., we find it is not disinherited.

† All probably, except Christendom, (2 Thess. ii.), which will superciliously pity these for their faith.

ing punishment, (xiv. 9, 10), and is to be endued with strength to fear God and to give glory to Him. But the gospel which these receive, and by which they are to be saved, is but a very small part of that gospel which is preached now, (chap. xiv. 6, 7.) Here, however, the end of their faith is glanced at. They stand before the throne, clothed with white robes, and with palms * in their hands, ascribing salvation

* Israel had encamped under the palm trees of Elim. (See Exodus xv. 27.) That time was a shadow of this. (See Ezek. xl. 16.) Also in xli. 18, mention is made of both cherubim and palm trees, representing, possibly, the heavenly and the earthly things of this time. The English reader ought to be informed that the word rendered "Palm" is, in the original, "Phoenix." See Psalm ciii. 5, and John xii. 13. Also note, that the palm and the crown are each of them emblems of victory, and tokens of the Lord's approbation of those that possess them; for the word translated crown, is never in the original, diadem, which expresses majesty, save when it is used of the Beast (xiii. 1,) or of Christ, (xix. 12.) Everywhere else the word for crown is *στεφανος*, the laurel crown, a crown for a victor. Then what is the full difference intended to be conveyed between the palm and the crown? All is, of course, of grace; still the difference teaches us that those who now overcome, win a more difficultly-obtained reward. Now, seeing that the overcomers in the great tribulation will only have to choose between so glaring an alternative as Christ or the Beast; it is probable that the crown is promised to all victors now, inasmuch as they are not deceived by religious evil of a specious and plausible sort.

to God and to the Lamb. With hunger, and with thirst, and with persecution for their faith, these have at length done with for ever, (see Luke xxi. 34—36.) God comforts them with that tender word—and in love repeated—"No more ; no more," (verse 16.) Nay, I had almost said that He rather comforts Himself here, that these had safely got through all their trials. Whilst, on the positive side, the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall fulfil unto them all those promises* of their God on which they had been content to hope. And to crown all, the loving hand of their God shall itself wipe out every tear from their eyes—ample compensation, surely, for all their past sufferings. Better had it been for them had they believed in the Lord, when He was preached, so as He is now, and until the rapture! Then those sorrows they had been saved (iii. 10), and far higher glory had been, humanly speaking, theirs. This we have proved at the beginning of this lecture. For those last closing years, after *our* Hope has been fulfilled, but before Christ appears to the world, are designed, as we shall see, on God's part, to press the question, in all its simplicity, on every living man, whether he will

* Feeding and ruling, or leading, ever are represented in Scripture as the two parts of shepherd work. (Ezek. xxxiv. 23 ; Heb. xiii. 7).

have God or Satan—Christ or the Beast! Those that then decide for God, will be slain, (chap. xiii. 15.) Those that decide for present ease, with the worship of the Beast, will be tormented in the lake of fire for ever and ever, (chap. xiv. 10.) Yet, if any are kept from this, it will be due to God's electing love, (chap. xiii. 8.) No wonder, therefore, at their joyful hallelujahs, when they stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, (chap. xv. 2.)

LECTURE VIII.

CHAPTERS VIII. AND IX.—THE SECOND SERIES OF HARDENING JUDGMENTS ON CHRIST'S FOES.

THE judgments of the Trumpets, on which, in due course, we come now to reflect, are evidently sorer far than those of the Seals which only introduce disasters to some extent similar in kind to those which happen even now. Wars, famines, and pestilences are, as the Lord Himself testifies, only the beginning of sorrows. Yet even those judgments are of so severe a character, that they result in the explosion of the sixth Seal. By the earlier ones men had been enraged; with this one their fury burst all bounds. This sixth Seal had been followed by the general upheaval of society, and by the apostasy of multitudes of the false teachers of Christianity. Now ensues the opening of the seventh Seal. The concomitant of this action is stated to be the giving of seven Trumpets to the seven angels which stand before God. Thus it is evident that these seven Trumpets are the seven subdivisions of of the seventh Seal. For the seventh chapter of

this book is to be regarded as partaking somewhat of a parenthetical character, and revealing the security of the earthly people of God, notwithstanding the judgments that are yet to follow. For, inasmuch as under the Trumpets the passions of men will be still more aroused against God, and themselves wax more diabolical, even presently to such a pitch, that under the Vials they will defy Him to His very face, (xix. 19) ; so, most appropriately, ere these judgments commence, the welfare of that people who shall witness for Him in those awful days, is first looked after. Then at once, without any delay on the part of God, proceeds the infliction of the second series of His hardening judgments.

And as to these Trumpets,—the last three are carefully distinguished in chap. viii. 13, from the first four, in that those last ones are directed against the “inhabiters of the earth” ; the earlier four are only *indirectly* aimed at *men*. Also observe, that in the judgments of the first four Trumpets, there is, besides the above measured step in the gradual approach of unmitigated wrath, also another indication of the same striking fact. For there is an express limitation therein to “the third part” of that on which the blows in succession fall. This language is in sharp contrast with what we read of the third and last series of judgments, namely, those of the Vials. For whilst in BOTH Trumpets and Vials the blows proceed in exactly

the same order, to wit, first on the earth, next on the sea, thirdly on the rivers, and fourthly on the sun ; not one word of reservation as to the extent of the judgment do we find in the account of the Vials ; albeit there is this in each case in the account of what ensues under the Trumpets. And hence we see how unwillingly, and with distinctly marked steps in advance, God proceeds to extremities in the execution of His vengeance, and how the murky clouds of wrath rise thicker and heavier from His throne, as men are more and more ripened in their guilt. So was it His way of old time, when He interposed for the deliverance of His people from the hard bondage of Pharaoh.

Above I have implied that, without any delay on the part of God, the opening of the seventh Seal, and the consequent handing of the seven Trumpets to the seven angels, and their commencing, one after the other, to sound withal :—that these things ensue in rapid succession, immediately after the opening of the sixth Seal. There is, however, one slight pause in this otherwise unceasing and continuous action. For thus we read in chap. viii. 1 : “ And when he had opened the seventh Seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour.” The question arises, what this pause was for ? Certainly not to indicate any stay in the continuity of the judgments, because, in the very next verse we read of the Trumpets being given to the angels. It is remark-

able how Scripture usually explains itself, if only we will listen to it. Now, in verses 3 and 4, we read of the prayers of the saints ascending to God along with the smoke of the incense, out of the hand of the Angel of the covenant—that great and uncreated Angel that stands up for Israel, and who had already sealed them in chap. vii. 2.

Surely, then, this account of the silence in heaven for a while, is given to show that God will wait for His sealed earthly people to pray to Him. In chap. vii. we behold God's grace to these; here, in chap. viii. we perceive their responsibility to supplicate His interposition. These are to enter into their chambers, and shut their doors about them, and spread their petitions before Him in view of the wrath of their and of His foes. And this explanation is confirmed further by the perception of what is the subject matter of these saints' prayers, which their Angel offered unto God. For let the reader compare together verses 4 and 5 of this chap. viii., and see if there be not there suggested, what we may, for plainness, term cause and effect; in ver. 4, cause, and in ver. 5, effect. For ver. 5 is the epitome comprehensively of the action of the Trumpets, which action is about to be described in detail. But the judgments of the Trumpets are poured out on Israel's foes. Therefore, what the prayers of these saints were for, and which their divine Angel offered unto

God, were judgments on their foes ; and in this way, their own deliverance. Their prayers, in short, are just such as we oft find in the Psalms ; and let it not be forgotten, they are the prayers of these very people, and at this very period. (See Psalm xliv. and lxxxiii. Also see Isaiah lxiii. 15 ; lxiv.) And here we see how these prayers are accepted, namely, through the intercession of their Messiah,* and how speedily they are answered by their God. And thus, most perfectly, ver. 5 explains ver. 4, and then ver. 4 with ver. 8 explains ver. 1, about the "silence in heaven." By attention to this the reader will be much helped in his apprehension of the scope of the chapter, and he will be preserved from those foolish guesses which some have made as to this half-hour's silence in ver. 1. He will perceive that the chapter consists of two parts. First, of God waiting for His Jewish people to pray, and of the prayers of these coming up before God ; and then, secondly, the answer of their God unto those prayers. And exquisitely precious it is, in this view, to note the loving-kindness of God thus waiting for His chosen to call upon Him to befriend them against their foes, and His listening intently for their feeble cry.

* Already, on chap. vii., I have fully discussed the question of the appearance of the Lord Jesus in angelic guise in vii. 2 ; viii. 3 ; x. 1.

Precious also to behold this same Angel, who has from the beginning of their history stood forth as their Deliverer, here still seen at His gracious work. Ah ! it is, as is here represented, the incense of His merits, by which the prayers of His people at any time find acceptance. Prayers never reach God, we here behold, just as they escape the lips of His chosen. No ! there is an intermediate action. The great Intercessor mingles His own merits therewith, and thus combined, they are presented before God. But here it must on no account be forgotten, these prayers that are specified in our chapter are the prayers of His earthly people. And it would even appear, from chap. v. 8, that these prayers of Israel shall be offered at this time unto God by the cherubim, or church of the Firstborn. Thus these two Scriptures each supplement and illustrate each other. In the earlier passage, a people already with God is seen, and nearer to God than Israel, although interested in them, (v. 8) ; and here, (viii. 3—5,) that the great Intercessor Himself takes up Israel's case. The answer of God is immediate ; first, in general, " voices, lightnings, thunderings, and an earthquake ;" and then, secondly, in full detail, in the seven Trumpets, and consequently, in the seven Vials. From all this, it is evident that the judgments inflicted on the earth in this and the following chapters, are to be regarded as, in one sense, in

response to Israel's prayers. This is the way in which once again God will deliver them, by hardening the hearts of the men of Christendom, to their destruction. Verily, therefore, the church is not and cannot be in this scene at all. Ere aught of this comes to pass, she has been taken home.

Now, watching the mode of God's answer in regard to Israel's prayers about their foes, and their own deliverance and blessing, it will be advisable, first, briefly to ponder the judgments of the first four Trumpets ; for as I have already remarked, these are somewhat distinguished from the others ; in that those last three are specially directed against the *men* of the earth themselves. But the first four are in close continuation, and in immediate sequence with the sixth Seal. At the same time I have no wish to dogmatise as to the exact import of each of these particular judgments. I see that they are certainly in further developement of that upheaval of society effected by the opening of the six Seals ; and also that with the terrible woes of chap. ix., upon which we shall come to speak presently, they prepare that state of things in the world for the Beast and his ten kings, which is so brimful of misery, and whose awful reign is cut short by the appearing of the Lord Jesus with all His heavenly company. In case the four judgments are to be viewed literally as here described ; then they are judgments on the

"land," on the "sea," on the "rivers," and on the light ; only as yet in each * case with the express limitation as to the extent of the devastation.

On the other hand, if, as I much incline to think, the effects of these judgments are expressed in symbolic language, then the burning up of the trees and green grass will represent the disappearance of commercial prosperity. For, as we read in 1 Peter i. 24, "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass ; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." Where there is nothing but death, the breath of the Lord produces life. (See Ezekiel xxxvii. 9, 10.) But where there is aught of fleshly strength, or of glory on this side of death, the breath of the Lord withers it. (See Isaiah xl. 7). And if the glory of the Lord and His salvation are to be revealed, the pomp and the grandeur of man must fade away. But it is on much of this human grandeur that the judgment of the first Trumpet descends. Panics, failures, collapses of gigantic schemes of vain men, are not uncommon even now ; but then others that, in their effects, will be more wide-spread, disastrous and abiding, are yet to come ; and doubtless this decay of all confidence of each man in his

* See the Greek, with the additions of the critics. Thus, ver. 7, after the words, "was cast to the earth," should have, "and the third part of the earth was burnt up."

fellow, will in great part be consequent upon the disorganization of society under the sixth Seal ; for this judgment of the first Trumpet is, as we have seen, the first of the seven subdivisions of the seventh Seal.

Naturally, so to speak, there would seem to result from all this, utter confusion. By a great mountain hurled into the sea, is probably symbolized the total vanishing away of the old government of the Roman world, and of the established order and framework of society, capsized and broken to pieces by the democracy, which even now chafes fiercely under it. Already, among the masses of the lower orders there are pent up smouldering fires of hate, of envy, of covetousness, and of desire for the removal of all distinctions of classes, which yet shall not only burst forth in volcano-like power under the sixth Seal ; but shall overwhelm, in their sweeping range, all barriers and everything whereby one man is protected against the rapine and violence of any other. Add to this picture, the sure prediction in the next chapter (ix.) of hordes of lost spirits being allowed to possess the bodies of men, and to urge earth's inhabitants on in their hate against God, and in their defiance of His name ; add, also, the additional colouring in chapter xii., of the devil and his angels all being cast down from heaven to the earth by the heavenly saints, three years and a half after their own rapture ; conjoin these various and

awful touches to the darkening picture, and behold what a pandemonium this world will yet become, and in what a horrible condition it will be when He returns with us His glorified Bride.* As to what is suggested by "mountain" in symbolic Scripture, let the reader consult such passages as Psalm x. 6, xi. 8, xxx. 7, and specially, because it is here referred to by the holy seer, Jeremiah li. 25. There the mountain is the imperial power of the first Gentile monarchy ; in our chapter, it is the power of the last of these monarchies. But God views those four great empires, as in the main idea, one. For this reason, in part, the name Babylon, which properly belongs to the first of these four, is also often, in this book

* I conjure my readers not easily to surrender the grand Scripture truth of the Church being the heavenly Bride of Christ, but His Body only. There is an article in the very last number of this periodical, in which, at best, the full truth is only feebly put on this point ; for in commenting on Ephes. v., the writer says truly, that the Holy Ghost there mentions seven illustrations of Christ's way with the Church. But the seven he cites, are not cited in the order of the passage ; nor, indeed, are they the seven of the Holy Ghost there at all. For one of the seven enumerated in the article, is His oneness with her ; which is, of course, to bring the thought of the Body prominently before the mind's eye. But in the passage, it is the thought of the Bride that is prominent. I hope the arrangement of the seven by the Holy Ghost, has not been disjointed to reverse the teaching of the passage. There, in the scripture

of the Revelation, applied to the last one of them—Rome. The symbolic import of sea, or of many waters, is too well known to require elucidation. The term stands, of course, for a surging multitude of people, (xiii. 1, xvii. 15.) And whoever has gazed upon a vast and thick concourse of people, and has marked how they swayed to and fro, has listened to the murmuring hum of their voices, as of the roar of the distant sea; or has even been struck with the instability of the populace, and the fickleness of the crowd; such an one will apprehend well the appropriateness of this symbol.

At the sound of the third angel's trumpet some notable star falls from its exalted place, tracing, meteor-like,

the first six of the seven are set in pairs, and the seventh is placed as the crown of all. The pairs are these: (a) He loved the Church; *secondly*, He gave Himself for it. (b) He sanctifies it; *fourthly*, He cleanses it. (c) He nourishes it; *sixthly*, He cherishes it. Then, *seventhly*, in full and unmistakable allusion to Eve's being brought to Adam, He presents the Church to Himself. Then the words about being taken out of His body are in continued allusion to the manner of Eve's formation. Only in Genesis, it was the Lord God who brought Eve to Adam; in Ephesians it is Christ who presents the Church to Himself. And thus a great proof of the Deity of Christ is suggested here. But this precious teaching is disarranged, in order to thrust forward the idea about the Body. Truly, the latter is a Scriptural thought; but so, too, is the former. And it is the former that is prominent in this Eph. v.

its downward course in flame, until, falling lower and lower, its light is finally quenched in the mighty waters. But "the stars are the angels of the churches." Multitudes of the unconverted teachers of Christianity had apostatized, as we have seen, under the sixth Seal, having been disowned by the Lord, and left behind at the rapture. And the awful confusion spreading and increasing all around them, together with the rising opposition to the name of Christ, had facilitated their perception of the uselessness any longer of their maintaining their hypocritical profession, by removing what inducements remained for them to maintain it. Still, however, some of these would hold out a little longer, specially those in very high places in the ecclesiastical heavens. But the persistence of such in their empty profession would only be a matter of time, for a little longer or somewhat briefer space. And the circumstances of this eventful period are, as we see, such as are calculated to expedite the resolve of waverers in regard to their throwing off their religious mask. And as to this one prominent "star," it is evident from the inspired account itself, that its light had not been benign. Much influence it had indeed possessed; but that influence had been only of a baneful character; for its name, as is certain, symbollically expressed, is Wormwood; and the waters into which it falls become likewise wormwood. (See Jeremiah ix.

15, and xxiii. 15). Many who had looked up to, and been guided by this "star," perish in consequence of its fall. Their inert and merely intellectual faith, and also all their vain hopes as to heaven, expire simultaneously with the light of their "star." Probably these "many" had been stout controversialists for the way of thinking and for the faith of their "star." But as their faith had stood in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God, what remains for them to do, but to let all go, when their "star" falls, and the great head of their empty faith apostatises? Oh! cannot we, the children of God, draw a lesson even for ourselves from all this glorying in man, of which there is so much even now, specially among the "babes in Christ," (1 John ii. 27); and learn to glory in one Name and in one lovely Man—"JESUS ONLY."

The fourth Trumpet—the last before the three woe-trumpets—follows, and as a consequence, the old rulers disappear. Ere this period, they had lost all authority; now, with the rising tide of anarchy, they are swept away altogether. Influence even, they have none. Thus the state of lawlessness is perfected. "The powers that be" now "are ordained of God"; they were ordained for the blessing of man. For God knows what wickedness is in the heart of man, and how, if the world is not to become a hell, that wickedness needs repression. To be

shut up among a company of desperate characters for a few days, or even hours, where no one has any weight to control the others, must be horrible to anyone who is not past all feeling. But this appears to be what, under the fourth Trumpet, the third part of the Roman empire is to drift to ; and then, quickly after, under the fourth Vial, a similar condition, though intensified and with other ills besides, ensues throughout the world. Thus shall men be taught what it is to reject and to hate the beneficent reign of God's Son. For if we would understand this book of the Revelation, we must omit in idea this present time, this parenthesis, as it has been termed, of God's dealings, in calling out the Church, and learn that when that call has been completed—like the sheet that Peter beheld first let down for a while to earth, and then drawn up again to heaven—then will God resume His dealings with the world, precisely where He left them off, ere that wondrous call began. For even yet will He teach Israel and the world how mad was their folly in crucifying the Son of His love. Men want a millenium without Christ. They shall have a taste of it. A very short period, however, will suffice. Such shall learn by bitter experience what was the sort of thing they desired. Then, further, from this anarchic scene of rabble-rule and mob-law, will arise that puissant tyrant, the Beast and his ten kings.

The earlier condition, that which these four Trumpets sounding will introduce, will more resemble the period at the close of the book of Judges, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and when one of the tribes of Israel had almost perished from the land, amid the discord and display of men's vile passions. The later condition of things will more resemble the after reign of Saul, the king that Israel desired. But inasmuch as it is not until chapter xiii. of this book that the way of this wilful king is described; so we will not anticipate what we shall find treated of there.

Nevertheless, it is exceedingly instructive to observe how perfectly the several parts of this mighty display of the retributive justice of God—we had almost said, the acts in this divine drama—hang together. Add also, that what is recorded to follow the sounding of the first four Trumpets, affords, if the symbolic interpretation of these Trumpets be accepted, such a natural sequence of events, in the order in which those events appear to be placed, and all of those successive events together, as the necessary developments of the break up of society under the sixth Seal, as itself to form strong presumptive evidence of the correctness of the symbolic mode of interpretation of these Trumpets, and to carry therewith its own conviction of its truth.

We might also further affirm with safety, that

what we find predicted in this book of Revelation, concerning the hardening judgments on God's foes, finds an earnest thereof even now. And thus probably some small degree of truth exists in the historical mode of interpretation contended for by many; for the "mystery of iniquity doth already work." Even now the rumblings of the distant thunder-storm may be faintly heard. Society is dwelling, as it were, on the crater of a volcano, the pent up fires of which may, almost at any moment, burst out in an unparalleled display of mob-passion and lawlessness. But the Almighty Hinderer, the Holy Ghost, will not allow things to reach this dire pass whilst we, God's children, are still here. But in its own time, what God hath said must come to pass. Then at last, when He returns to reign Whose right all here is, He will show what beautiful rule is. (See 1 Timothy vi. 15.)

But on the other hand, if any reader hesitates to follow me in the above interpretation of these hardening judgments, he will still admit, that whether the words of these judgments be interpreted, as we incline to believe, symbolically, or whether literally; the principles and general plan of this book, which we have sought to exhibit, remain equally untouched.

I have only to add, that the third part of the Roman earth, referred to again and again in our chap-

ter, seems to point to the western part of Europe, and also that the particular "star," or religious leader, who, under the third trumpet, quite apostatises from the name of Christ, may probably refer to the bishop of Rome. For the Beast will be ministered to by his false prophet, according to chap. xiii. 11—15. That is to say, then the civil power will be quite above the religious, or ecclesiastical power. This is a change that is even now preparing ; and in this direction things are tending with the head of the Papal system. But on this I have no wish to enter, as I am unwilling to encumber this exposition with aught that has the slightest appearance of conjecture. On the one hand, my main endeavour in these lectures is to present a general outline of the principles in the interpretation of the book. But on the other, a few vague generalities are not all, I think, that God would have us learn herefrom. May God by His Spirit keep both readers and writer from all error ; and also may He guide us into all the truth, and show us "the things to come."

Chapter ix., about the woe Trumpets, we must reserve, please God, till another time.

LECTURE IX.

CHAPTER IX.—THE SECOND SERIES OF HARDENING JUDGMENTS ON CHRIST'S FOES.

(CONTINUED.)

NOW we come to the woe Trumpets ; namely, to the judgments directly inflicted on men themselves. These fifth and sixth Trumpets are the climax of the second series of judgments, and to which the others that preceded have conduced, in the same way as the sixth Seal was the crowning judgment of the Seals.

The fifth Trumpet is sounded, and the seer marks the strange and awful action of some "star"—not falling, as unfortunately we have suggested by the English translation ; but—"THAT HAD FALLEN" * *previously* from heaven to earth. His eye follows some notable religious teacher in Christendom, that had, ere this period, finally apostatized. Such a famous "star" had abandoned his profession of Christianity under the third Trumpet, (see viii. 10) ; even as very many inferior teachers had already done under the sixth Seal. Some proof was offered at the close

* ΠΕΠΤΩΚΟΤΑ.

of the last lecture, that this notable star was the Bishop of Rome. Now if this "star," of which mention is here made in verse 1, be identical with that in viii. 10—if the inspired language used here, "a star that had fallen," looks back, as it surely seems to do, to what had but shortly before transpired under Trumpet three, then the course of action of this ecclesiastical personage is in the way of continuous decline. He had held out in his hypocritical pretension longer than most of the false teachers, because he had had much more to lose of earthly power and aggrandisement, if Christianity were generally adjudged a myth. But the confusion and the mobocracy, as they increased under the earlier judgments, had so much dried up his resources and paled his dignity, that at length he too, under Trumpet three, had repudiated the name of Christ. Then, here, his next action is perceived to be akin to that of Saul's with the witch of Endor. If heaven refuses to help him; the aid of hell will he invoke. Also, more generally, under the first four Trumpets, the rule among men instituted by God (Romans xiii. 1) for earth's blessing, had been withdrawn; under these other two Trumpets, hellish influences are more immediately brought to bear, as we shall see, instead thereof. The connection of these difficult Scriptures becomes in this way so vivid, natural, and real, as to leave little or no doubt on my mind that the truth here is our clue.

To this apostate ecclesiastic is given "the key of the well of the bottomless pit." He is permitted, for his own judgment and perdition, to call to his succour those whom wicked men even now not unfrequently desire to befriend them; I mean not Satan and his angels; their action at this crisis is brought before us in chap. xii. and xiii. Whose help, then, is here invoked? To answer this, careful attention to this and other Scriptures is required. Let it then be noted that—

1. The bottomless pit is not the term used in the Word to express the place of final punishment. On the contrary, it would appear as if a contrast is in this very book of Revelation drawn between these two places. For in chap. xix. 20, we read that the Beast and the False Prophet are cast alive, when Christ appears, into (τὴν) "the lake of fire, burning with brimstone." But Satan at that period is cast "into the bottomless pit." (xx. 3.) Then at the close of the Millenium, he is let out of his temporary prison, (xx. 7.) He goes and deceives the nations; after which last work of his, he is THEN at length cast into the lake of fire, where the Beast and the False Prophet had been cast a thousand years before him. (Compare xix. 20, with xx. 10.) Therefore it is certain, that where he had been previously confined, during Christ's millennial reign, namely, in the bottomless pit, (xx. 3), is not the same place as the

lake of fire, into which he was subsequently cast, after his success with the millennial nations.

2. The term "bottomless pit," simply imports the heart, or the centre of the earth. For if any one were to descend from the surface of the earth, until he reached the centre, and were then to continue his progress, he would at once begin to ascend towards the surface on the other side. The same word, though rendered "the deep," is used for Hades, and as explanatory of the place to which Christ descended at His death in Rom. x. 7. And Hades is not the lake of fire; for the contents thereof are emptied into that lake of fire in Rev. xx. 18, 14. No: Christ descended, as we are expressly informed in Eph. iv. 9, into "the lower parts of the earth." So, by comparing this Eph. iv. 9 with Rom. x. 7, we learn that the Lord Jesus descended into the deep or the Abyss,* or the bottomless pit, as the same expression is rendered here in Rev. ix. 1, and which word is paraphrased as "the lower parts of the earth" in Eph. iv. 9.

8. I do not for a moment wish to imply that Christ's sufferings were unended on the cross. Quite the reverse. His own triumphant exclamation, "It is finished," would be ample to remove any doubt on this point. But it does seem to me perfectly

* την Αβυσσον.

clear that the entire unseen world, or Hades, has been wonderfully affected by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Ere He rose from the dead, that unseen world—"the lower parts of the earth"—were divided, according to Luke xvi., into two perfectly distinct compartments; and though with a great gulf fixed between them, yet evidently contiguous to each other. The name of the one compartment of Hades, as we learn from Christ's words to the penitent robber, was Paradise; the name of the other was Gehenna, or Tartarus. (2 Peter ii. 4, Greek). Into the former, i.e., Paradise, went the disembodied souls of the righteous; thither also went Christ's own soul. Into the latter, the souls of the wicked dead departed. But now that Christ has triumphed over death, the souls of His people who die, are at once, instantly with Him. To be "carried by angels," as of old, would require some period of time to elapse ere they reached their destination. This is in no wise the case now. On the contrary, "absent from the body, present with the Lord," without any interval of time whatever. But the Lord Jesus is not now in "the lower parts of the earth;" He is exalted "far above all heavens." Hence it follows that the locality itself of Paradise has been changed. When the Lord Jesus went to Paradise, His path from this world was a DESCENT, (Eph. iv. 9); but when Paul was in some way or other taken for a while

to Paradise, after the ascension of Christ, his path from this world was an ASCENT—he was “caught up.” (2 Cor. xii. 4.)

4. From the above it is evident that the lower parts of the earth, or the Abyss, that is, the pit without a bottom, as we have it expressed in ver. 1 of our chapter, is now, since Christ's glorification, the abode only of lost spirits. Not now is this abyss (or “the deep,” as it is rendered in Rom. x. 7) in two distinct compartments; the righteous dead go not there at all. The souls that depart thither now, are only the souls of those that are lost for ever. Neither are the devil and his angels there; where these latter are, and whence they rule this world's darkness, we are precisely informed are “the heavenly places.” (Eph. vi. 12, margin). There, as we seek daily in spirit to dwell and walk in our heavenly Canaan—there do they wrestle with us! Thence they will be utterly cast out by the Church, at her rapture to be with the Lord. (Rev. xii.) And even when they are cast out at length from those heavens; neither then are they at once dispossessed of the earth too. On the contrary, they are then cast out from the heavens to the earth. Presently, when the Lord comes with His saints to the earth, then, but not before, does this bottomless pit receive them; and presently, again, after the Millenium is past, they are cast into the lake of fire.

5. There is an exactness in the Greek which is lost sight of in our authorized version; a whole word, both in ver. 1, and again in ver. 2, has been unaccountably omitted by our translators. The full reading in the original is as thus: "To him was given the key of *the well* of the bottomless pit. And he opened *the well* of the bottomless pit." The teaching, so far as I understand it, appears to be, that there is a shaft, by means of which the souls of the lost descend into the interior of the earth—their prison, until brought forth again at the close of the Millenium, to stand in their raised bodies before the great white throne, and THEN, to be cast into the lake of fire.

6. But here we find, that by the Lord's permission, to Whom the keys of the unseen world belong, this shaft, communicating with the interior of the earth, where the souls of the wicked are, will be opened. And hordes of lost spirits, amounting ultimately in number to two hundred millions, and possibly being the most daring ones of all past ages, will, some little while before Christ appears to the world in judgment, ascend this shaft, and possess men living in those very last days, even as of old did the demons possess those of whom we read again and again in the Gospels. In spiritualism, and in necromancy, and in dealing with familiar spirits, and in witchcraft, there may at present be much of trickery and of

imposition ; but as the very existence of these terms proves at least the desire of some men for this coalition, so the many Scriptures which treat of these things argue the possibility thereof. This very passage also which we are considering, assumes the like possibility of communication between men here and of spirits there, and of this fallen "star" being instrumental in bringing that communication actually about, with Christ's permission. "He opened the shaft of the abyss." The fact is, the clouds of judgment are rapidly getting thicker ; earth is becoming more and more a pandemonium. As the Seals were opened one after the other, earth's affairs went from bad to worse. Then the first four Trumpets, in further developement of the anguish produced by the sixth Seal, rendered the confusion down here worse confounded. Then the woes of chap. ix. on the inhabitants of the earth themselves, are in markedly increased intensity of all that had preceded ; whilst the woe of the seventh Trumpet, when Satan and his hosts are cast out of heaven to the earth, and when they raise up the mystic Beast from the sea, who subjugates all men except the elect unto himself : here again is evidently sorer judgment still. And thus the measured tread in the onward march of these judgments—the deepening gloom—the gradual addition of every bitter drop, up to the infusion of the very last ingredient in earth's cup of

woe throughout these chapters, is most striking. That the interpretation, in so far as the actual drift of chap. ix. already suggested, induces this notice as to the continuous rise of the waves of wrath, is itself evidence of its correctness. And this is the "good time coming" of godless, impious men.

But further: these deluded men, blinded by hell smoke, will be rendered increasingly fiendish. Even now, many seem in their actions, aye, and occasionally in their very countenances, to be demons indeed. But how much more will this be a reality, yea, a common reality, then! As if midway between the horses and their riders evoked by the opening of the Seals of chap. vi., and of the divine Rider on the white horse of chap. xix., here again, in this chap. ix. we read much of horses and of horsemen. The horse is the war horse, and is the symbol of defiance and of war.* Under the Seals the spirit of defiance to

* So everywhere throughout this Revelation. There seems also a similar idea in *εφρναξαν* of Psalm ii., as quoted in Acts iv. 25. For this Greek word, used of the snorting of high mettled horses, is applied to the defiant language and actions of the Gentiles of this very period. Is it an undesigned coincidence that that epistle of Paul, which contemplates the Christians struggling against the lofty spirit of the world, is addressed to the Philippians, which word translated means, "To those fond of horses;" even as the epistles that speak of the believer's Hope are addressed to the Thessalonians, which word translated is, "To those who win the victory?"

God begins to be quite displayed; but here now it is no longer of one horse that we read, as in chap.vi., but of very many horses. This spirit of defiance is now much more rife everywhere. Undoubtedly this is the suggested idea in this frequent symbol in our chapter. For under the *sixth* Trumpet this symbol is heightened considerably as to its import; that is to say, whilst under the fifth Trumpet we read of horses only; under the sixth Trumpet we hear of the horsemen. And thus it is that the spirit of open defiance to God assumes more form and shape, as the men on whom these terrible judgments descend are increasingly hardened against God. The fact that the symbol is thus intensified in vividness under the sixth Trumpet, is a certain clue as to the interpretation.

But the comparison of these spirits is also to locusts, in regard to their numbers, and to the devastation they effect, and to the misery they cause. Here, the prophecy of Joel is alluded to, and somewhat explained and expanded. There, men in multitudes as locusts, are in the Holy Land, taking possession of it, as if it were their own. Here are the inhabitants of the earth, being maddened against Israel's Messiah, through the agency in part of these lost spirits; so that their frenzy shall find vent somewhat later, in gathering themselves together on the plains of Armageddon, to contend boldly with

the Lord, if He should interfere for His earthly people, and to defy Him to His very face. For the struggle of the men of the world with God and with His Christ, will certainly converge, as all Scripture indicates, towards Palestine, as the period nears for His appearing. (See xiv. 20; 'xvi. 14—16; xvii. 14; xix. 19.) For the Beast, that is to say, the great Roman Emperor who is to be raised up by Satan out of the anarchy, produced by the divine hardening judgments, will require that his image be worshipped throughout the world. This image—this abomination that maketh desolate, he will also cause to be set up in Palestine, and in the holy place. A remnant in Israel will refuse to worship it. Then will he go forth to that land with his ten confederate kings, utterly to destroy and to make away many. The chivalry of Europe will be gathered together near Megiddo. The hosts of the nations will be prepared to dispute with the Lord as to whose are the earth and the kingdom, and specially as to whose are that land and people. There will He deal with them in judgment. (Zech. xiv.; Joel iii.; Rev. xiv.) Already in type has this contest been waged by His foes with the Lord. (Judges v. 19.) The day of Midian is to be re-enacted. (Isaiah ix. 5; Judges vii.) Now let but this last day of the Lord, as described in Rev. xix., be borne in mind by the reader, and at once the tendency and object of the

judgments of this chap. ix., in hardening men for that unequal struggle, will be perfectly comprehended. Then we see the importance of occasionally anticipating the teaching of subsequent chapters; for, in this way, the drift and continuity of the book, as a whole, will be so much the better grasped.

It is infinitely more important to attend to the scope of such a chapter as this, than to allow the mind to be almost engrossed with its details. And if now, as we honestly believe, we have succeeded in showing the general aim of this obscure but awful chapter, then the minor features of the picture will gradually become, in the reader's mind, distinct, and almost explain themselves. The hair of these mystic locusts may symbolize their absolute subjection; their iron breastplates, the artillery of those days; the teeth may glance at their courage; and their wings at the rapidity of their warfare. There can be no question that the time of the end will be a wonderful time, in a military point of view. So often in the accounts of the close of these days, is the picture drawn of armies as in battle array, and of the great men of the earth, as the leaders of those armies. (See, for instance, vi. 15, or xix. 18.) And when it is said in xiii., "Who is **ABLE** to make war with the Beast?" the vigour, the absoluteness, the extensiveness of his sway, and above all, the military power of his empire, seem to be suggested. Things

are certainly tending in this direction even now. There is, at this very moment, a change passing over several of the great European nations, which has not attracted the notice that it deserves. Hitherto, so many out of a thousand in each of those kingdoms, were compelled to enlist and to serve in war. Latterly, however, the tendency on the continent is to go further than this, and to transform every man of the nation into a soldier. This tendency of the rulers to require their male subjects all to become soldiers, and to make their own grandeur to consist in the largeness of their hosts; and their glory in the number of battles they have waged, and the enemies they have slain;—all this throws no little light on the prophetic word by which those rulers are characterized, as in this Book and in Daniel, namely, “wild beasts.” Also add here, that whilst the Beast of this book rises from the sea of peoples and nations, that is, is elected by universal suffrage; in xvii. 8, he is said to rise out of the bottomless pit; whilst here, in ix. 11, it is the chief of the mystic locusts that does so. Now, if what we have sought above to prove concerning the bottomless pit, and of the rise of the mystic locusts therefrom, be the teaching of the Scriptures, then, putting the three texts just cited together, it appears to follow that some mightier one of the spirits of the lost, then let loose out of their prison, will single

out and possess the soul of this Roman potentate of the future, who is to be destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's coming. Now the name of this superior spirit, as we are carefully informed in verse 11 of our chapter, is Destroyer. The Hebrew and Greek renderings of this name are each expressed, in order surely to remind us how many of the Lord's witnesses, both Jew and Gentile, will perish under his hand. And, in this manner, the false glare and the pomp of war are removed, as heaven's light is poured thereon. Oh! how perfect the contrast between these princes all—and specially between that notable one that is to come,—there is with our own precious Lord Jesus Christ, whose glory is to give life, and liberty, and joy, and peace to all who receive Him. At the same time we must conjoin the other side of this truth, in drawing attention to the contrast between this first of the three woe Trumpets and the view of the Lord afforded us in chapter vii. For there the Lord is seen taking care of His own and sealing them; here, in verse 4, in inflicting judgment on the unsealed. That same divine Lord who loves His own, will yet punish all that are ungodly.

But now, as verse 4 thus refers us back to the earlier part of chapter vii., about the sealing of the twelve tribes of Israel; so, likewise, the second woe trumpet may eye the second half of that same chapter vii. For there, it will be remembered, we

read of a countless multitude, that are to be saved out of all nations. And here, when the sixth Trumpet is sounded, the woe is no longer limited in its range, but spreads over the entire area of the four great monarchies of Daniel vii. And thus the line between those who fear God and those who do not, will not only be sharply drawn in these days; it will also be extended from western Europe to Greece, and Persia, and Babylon. For in verses 13 and 14 we read, "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 at (*ἐν*) the great river Euphrates." Evil angels, as we have already proved, * are at the head of those several Gentile monarchies. And in this fourteenth verse there is undoubted allusion to those four great empires, and to their source. As four cities stood on the banks of the Euphrates of old, (Gen. x. 10); so these four empires are each Babylonish in their character. Now, at the time of the end, these will be banded together in opposition to God and to His Christ. Not only the iron and the clay of the fourth kingdom, but also the brass, and the silver, and the gold, in fact, all the image, in its entirety, that Nebuchadnezzar beheld, will be broken in pieces by the Stone cut out without hands. (See

* In explanation of Daniel x., at page 137.

Daniel ii. 85, 45.) So, too, in the type long ago, Amraphel, King of Shinar (Babylon); Arioch, King of Ellasar (Greece); Chedorlaomer, King of Elam (Persia); and Tidal, King of nations, (as the Beast's rule will extend to the ten nations of Europe), all these were smitten, representatively, by Abram the Hebrew, whom Melchizedek blest. So largely will the platform widen for the display of the power of His arm in the battle (rather "war" *πολεμον*) of that great day of God Almighty, (xvi. 14.)

And as, under the sixth Trumpet, we mark the hardening judgment of God, widening in its extent; so further we behold its action on the men thus hardened, as more intensive and sorer far. Already we have noted one link between the first two woe Trumpets to be, in the defiant attitude, taken by the wicked against God. Except, indeed, as we have above noted, most remarkably in the first of these woe Trumpets, the defiance is represented by horses only; but in the second, by horsemen; thus contrastedly indicating, that as the judgments proceed, this defiance waxes more distinct and open, until even He is defied to His very face, (chaps. xvi. 14, xix. 19). I again advert to this now, because in our chapter some agency is implied whereby this defiant spirit is produced. For (and here again is another link between the two woes of this chapter) there is emphatic reference to the "tails" of the locusts, and of the horses. Now what the tail in symbol represents, we are informed by Isaiah

ix. 15, "The prophet that speaketh lies, he is the tail." Now with all this wonderfully coincides what we shall hear as to the ways of the Antichrist, or False Prophet, of chap. xiii. 11—14; also compare chap. xvi. 13, 14. These passages prove that although, after the rapture of the Church, the unconverted teachers of Christianity will apostatise therefrom; nevertheless, able and earnest propagators of error will abound, who, under the headship of the last Antichrist, will be largely instrumental in goading men on thus to undisguised antagonism to God.

Thus every touch in this fearful picture of what is coming on the earth, as it is examined, chimes in with the ascertained scope of the whole. The chapter closes with stating that men repented not of their idolatry, baring somewhat more, what had been Christendom's chief sin, even in that very particular where she had fancied herself so clear. (See notes to chap. i. 11). Also there is distinct allusion to the effect of the plagues of Egypt. When the Seals were opened, men had trembled at the thought of His wrath; therefore they were not yet quite hardened. But when the Trumpets are blown, you read no more of their trembling; they seem brought midway towards that state of mind between the trembling, which was the result of the Seals, and the open opposition, which is the effect of the Vials. Here they appear rendered stoical and callous.

Our chapter has been an awful one ; nor can we, nor do we desire to make it otherwise ; nor to explain away its terrible forebodings. We perceive what awaits the world, after we have been removed home, until our Lord returns with us. Generally speaking, in the more awful chapters, there are breaks in the clouds of judgment, with beautiful glimpses of a bright heaven above and beyond them ; but here God's wrath is gathering heavily ; these black strata of cloud piled one on another, and full of the lightning of His fury, are just here so dense, that scarcely aught else of heaven is discernible. And these woes are on the men who are unsealed, (verse 4.) Still, even here one valuable hint as to the way of God in heaven above, at this period He again affords us. He had shown us in chap. viii. that the Trumpet judgments were in answer to the prayers of the Jewish remnant, and of His other witnesses. And here in verse 13, in allusion to chapter viii. 5, He repeats this. How much more, therefore, should we, His own children, approach Him boldly through the newly-slain and living Way, and by our Great High Priest ! And with what perfect certainty should we hold the amen of our God in answer to our petitions in the hand of our faith ! What a life of joy before our Father, and of triumph before our foes, would ours then be !

LECTURE X.

CHAPS. X. & XI.—“THOU MUST PROPHECY AGAIN.”

“THE VISION IS FOR AN APPOINTED TIME ;

THOUGH IT (OR “HE,” Heb. x. 37) TARRY, WAIT FOR IT ”

(OR HIM) Habak. ii. 3.

“**H**E sitteth on the right hand of God.” This doctrine of the Word, as well as Article of the Creed of many, has, nevertheless, well nigh faded away from the minds of Christians. Now-a-days it is commonly regarded by believers as a matter of very small importance, whether Christ is at the present moment sitting or standing before God. Of Him it is held that He is now in the one attitude yonder, and now in the other. In those very untrue words of the hymn, “In heaven itself He stands,” they are the few who do not join heartily. There is no doubt that the misunderstanding of a passage in Acts vii. has tended much to hinder the apprehension of the glorious truth on this point. It will therefore be well to recall our minds to the concurrent testimony of Scripture with the exception of that single passage, on which we will remark directly. And also to survey the

difference of doctrine suggested by the change in His posture: (See then Hebrews i., iv., viii., x.) Now consider that

1. Christ's sitting before God denotes, as the passages just cited themselves argue, the complete acceptance of Him as our Representative and High Priest.

2. Believers should watch by faith the sort and the measure of the welcome accorded by God to Him who has paid our debts, finished our salvation, and, above all, glorified God. For if there be aught like reserve in the heartiness of that welcome of the blessed Lord Jesus; then obviously our blessing cannot be of so exalted a character. This, too, is the more evident, since nowhere, as in the light of God, is the value of His blood seen. In the outer court of the Tabernacle the vessels were of brass, denoting God dealing in righteousness with our sins. But in the holy place the vessels were of gold, denoting that God, having settled outside the question of sin, now had full scope to reveal His own perfections fully. Hence, as Jesus our Lord has, through His own blood, passed into the holiest of all, it ought to be held as a cardinal truth that God has seated, and enthroned, and crowned Him there.

3. Nor is this all. For, as we have learnt from chapter iv., the Church also is to be caused to sit

down in the Divine presence. Angels never did this. But, with the exception of Ephesians vi., where we are told to "stand" and fight with our spiritual foes, who would, if they could, keep us from our inheritance, the church is invariably represented in the Word as at home in the highest glory. The highest honour through Christ, viz., sitting down before God, and, in consequence, the deepest prostration of soul, at the wonders of infinite grace, viz., bowing down before Him, these are the two related attitudes which those brought so nigh by His blood as we are, it is our right to take.

4. God's mode of beginning with us is from the Cross; and next from the empty grave of Christ. There is a corresponding result to us from each step in the path of Christ, commencing at the Cross, where God first gets hold of us and reaches our case. There, indeed, was our salvation finished. His Resurrection is our justification when we believe. His Ascension involves our heavenly calling; His Session corresponds with the revelation of the mystery of the church, one with Himself by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. To make that session of Christ an immaterial point, is, so far as we can, to be suicidal to our brightest hopes, and is disparaging to the glory of the Lord in its highest feature. Again:—

5. To represent as if at one time He were sitting down, and at another time He stood up, over and over again, times many, not only tarnishes the lustre of His work, but also interferes with the view of the perfection of His obedience. He is the perfect Servant! He has found obedience to God to be such a delightful thing, that having first become obedient unto Death, in resurrection He persists in that obedience. (See Exodus xxi. 6.) Now God has called Him up there, and said to Him, "Sit on my right hand, until," &c. Therefore it is that He sits down, namely, still in obedience. Therefore He continues seated, until such time as God shall say to Him, Rise up. All His session there, up to this very moment, is in continuation of His untiring, persistent obedience.

6. But how, then, are we to understand Acts vii. 56? Chrysostom has darkened counsel with his inadequate exposition: "To sit is the way of one who judges or commands; to stand, of one who fights."* Goodwin also misses the meaning of the word here. His interpretation is that Christ usually is seated; but when any one of His people is in trouble or suffering, He starts up, as a mother would do if she heard her child cry. Were the ways of God with Israel distinguished carefully from His ways with the church—if we grasped that the blessing

* "Sedere, judicantis et imperantis; stare, pugnantis est."

of an *earthly* people with some favour was one thing, and the blessing of a heavenly people with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies was another, this passage would then present no difficulty. The view of Goodwin's, which I have cited, is very pretty; but it is not true. Let us begin with Christ; then we shall see the truth.

He came to His own. They rejected Him. They crucified Him. But even that awful murder of God's well-beloved Son stopped not the outflow of His love; no, not even towards His earthly people. God raised Him from the dead. The Holy Ghost came down to testify in the first place to Israel, as to the heavenly worth and glory of the Crucified. (John xvi.) But Israel would not have Him, neither when Himself with them on the earth, nor yet in resurrection. To the second presentation of Christ unto them—that is to say, to the presentation of Christ in resurrection to them conjoined with the Holy Ghost's witness as to His glory; their answer was, in brief—Stephen's murder. Thus they proved that they had no heart for Him in any way. THEN HE SAT DOWN, and not before. Now God went on in His delightful work of telling out the matchless worth of His Son; and the preciousness of His finished work. In the heavens Christ was enthroned; on the earth, to correspond duly therewith, the *mystery of the church* was revealed. To Paul was entrusted the utterance of this mystery.

It was he who heard the Lord speak of His people so as to call them "*Me*." His ministry was to begin precisely where Stephen's ceased. For it was to be "of the things which he (Paul) had seen and heard." (Acts xxii. 15 ; xxvi. 16.) The Lord had retired into a higher, deeper glory, and with Him in that highest glory, a multitude of those who had been sinners of the Gentiles with those of Israel that now receive Him, were identified. Here compare His once rising up, in its immediate and eternal result on ungodly professors in Luke xiii. 25.

Then presently, at any moment, the church call may be completed, and the Bride removed to the Father's house. Thus and then will He provoke Israel to jealousy. They shall perceive that during the time of their rejection of Him, He, like His type Joseph of old, has got married—aye, and unto an Egyptian, too. But then He will proceed in His dealings with Israel, just where, in the persistent rejection of Him by the Jews of old, they were discontinued. He will stand up. He will come down. He will bring down with Him a blessing for Israel. For according to where He is at a given period, is the calling and the blessing of those who then obey Him.

Hence the view of Him presented to us in chapters x. and xi. Properly these two chapters should be joined together. Their subject is one. It is similar to the tenor of Exodus iii.—vi. Here we have the

commencement of the actual interposition of God in the behalf of His earthly people, and in the sending to them once again His witnesses, as erst He had sent to them Moses and Aaron.

God's present way as to this earth is a very strange and uncommon one. Save to the ear of faith He preserves almost perfect silence. Never scarcely before had He so totally withdrawn from intervention on earth. In Eden, the Lord God walked in the cool of the day. To the patriarchs He appeared in vision, and in some sort came down and conversed and ate with them. To Israel His presence was vouchsafed in the cloudy pillar. Even after the glory was sinned away He revealed His will by His prophets. A pause next ensues, which is at last broken by the voice of the Son of God in human flesh. But since He has been rejected Heaven is silent. For the presence in person here of the Holy Ghost, which is God's present testimony to the infinite dignity and matchless merits of His only-begotten Son, this is something altogether out of the ken of the world. (John xiv. 17.)

On the other hand, as to judgment, He has not interfered with the world since the Flood; or with any nations representing the world, since Israel was set aside. So it pursues its wretched course, desiring to be and to do without God. And God lets it alone. This silence of His to the world He so orders as to

be for the actual advantage of His *heavenly* people. For thus perfectly is their faith tested. Nothing glorifies God as does faith. And therefore the church has the grand opportunity of serving God in the most difficult and consequently the most exalted manner. In all dispensations God has required faith. Adam, even ere he fell, needed to trust God. The fall changes not this solitary requirement. (Heb. xi. 6.) If Adam in the midst of life had to believe that death would be the wages of sin; so we who have sinned, have to believe in God as the God of Resurrection-life. And so long as the heavenly saints are continued here, the earthly people are disowned by His sentence, Lo Ammi; and as to His promises of interference in their behalf against the world, they are as if He had forgotten them.

But when once the church is seen in heaven, as in iv. and v., the scene changes. Instantly His manner to Israel is different. Still as to His interference, its graduated mode is most worthy of attention. This is the third time that we read in this book of His action for Israel as angelic, vii. 2; viii. 2; and x. 1. Why it is angelic at all has been amply shown in chapter vii. None of these are His appearing in glory, and accompanied with His heavenly saints, in that full and personal manner in which He will ultimately descend for their deliverance. This is to be found in chapter xix. These three angelic

appearances are rather for the *hearts* of the faithful remnant. And they are graduated, I say, in their order of succession. In the first of the three He is beheld watchful over them, and sealing them, (vii. 2.) The possession of the seal identifies Him as their Friend. Next, in viii. 2, He is engaged in offering up their prayers. There, again, He is easily identified as the great altar Priest. But in this third picture of His angelic action, the advance of thought is most striking. Here it is no longer only attending to their concerns before God; but it is intervention on their behalf. In viii. their prayers go up; in x. He, though still in angelic guise, comes down. I think there may be some reference here to His name at the opening of Exodus iii., as the Angel of the Lord. So in Isaiah lxiii. 9, if He will become their Saviour, it is there said to be in His character as "Angel of His Presence."

The object of this His third measured step in their favour, is to send to them and others, rather than as yet to appear against their foes for them. The one will introduce the other, but the two—the scene in Rev. x. and the scene in Rev. xix., are as different as is Exodus iii. from Joshua x. or Judges vii. Only in those types of the day of the Lord, He Himself did not personally descend, as presently He will be seen, clothed with Almighty power. But yet this action of the Lord's in chapter x. resembles His way

of old, in that He comes now nearer for the great battle. In vii. and viii. we read not a word of His planting "His right foot upon the earth, and His left foot upon the sea." But all this we have most vividly set before us in chapter x. So, when He delivered Israel the first time, He began by sending a message from the wilderness, through His two chosen witnesses to Israel and to Pharaoh. Then when Pharaoh threw down the gauntlet in these words, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice," God answered him by Himself coming in some sort into Egypt. (See Exodus vi. 28.) Thus the two combatants, if so I may express myself reverently, were more like face to face. But it was only One of these, the God of Abraham, that had advanced to meet the foe. Nor did He more quit Egypt save in company with His redeemed Israel.

The action of planting the feet down, one foot on the earth, and the other on the sea, is tantamount to claiming the earth and the sea as His. There is a reference here, doubtless, to Joshua i. 3, 4, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon" shall be yours. This view is further confirmed by His oath here in verse 6. The sea is His, and He made it, and His hands prepared the dry land. For throughout this picture it is the question not whose is the heaven, but whose is the earth. Here He is seen asserting His claim. Likewise in xi. 4,

the witnesses are represented as standing before "the God" (or as it should be read), "the Lord of *the earth*," with which expression compare the very similar language when He of old began through Israel to assert his title to the dominion of the earth, by taking possession of the Holy Land. Thus observe the terms applied to God in Joshua ii. 11, and still more markedly in Joshua iii. 11—13, "The Lord of all the earth." The coincidence of thought is perfect, and ought to be very helpful in confirming our minds as to the interpretation. For here we see God again setting forth His rights, whilst on the other hand His judgments constrain men to give glory to the God of Heaven. (Rev. xi. 13.) If He will keep in heaven—well. But He will surrender no part of His dominions, no, not the remotest corner, to His foes. The kingdom* of this world shall yet become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ. (xi. 15.)

Here, too, He is seen with a rainbow, or, as it ought to be translated, with ~~THE~~† rainbow,—that one mentioned already in iv. 8—about His head. The rainbow is the pledge of His covenant with the earth. And that covenant with the earth is connected by the Lord with His promises to Israel in Isaiah liv. 9. Its encircling His brow testifies by one expressive symbol, that which "the little

* ἡ βασιλεια. † ἡ ῥαίς.

book" * spread open before Him whispers in another way, to wit, that He cannot forget Zion and the earth. For "the little book" in verses 2 and 8 is most undoubtedly the book of His promises to Israel. The next words, in ver. 2, which we have already explained, would show this. But if you read this Angel's oath, as uttered in ver. 5—7, no hesitation on this point can remain. He swears by Him "who created all things in heaven, and in the earth, and in the sea, that there shall be no longer delay:"† but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall be about to sound, ‡ the mystery ϕ of God shall be finished, as He hath declared,—or rather, as *He hath* PROMISED § to "His servants the prophets." Surely, therefore, His precious words in the prophets as to what He hath engaged to do for Israel, are those on which His eye is seen to rest here. (Compare Daniel xii. 7 with Dan. x., and remember the identity of the Angel in Dan. x. with the Angel in Rev. vii. 2, viii. 3, and x. 1, we have proved.) And hence we perceive why the book was now spread before Him. Men may spiritualize, or rather explain away, His statements

* το βιβλαριδιον.

† οτι χρονος ουκ εσται επι. The word χρονος is used similarly in chap. ii. 21 of this very book.

‡ οταν μελλη σαλπίζειν. ϕ Rom. xi. 25. § ως ευηγγελισε.

in Isaiah, Hosea, and other prophets, as to what He will do, when earth's time of blessing arrives. But they need not thus tell lies for God. It is mere unbelief on their part that induces this foolish, wicked practice. Because He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavens, has He but one blessing? Has He nothing for Israel whom He loved? Is His Christ to be Lord of one realm alone? Or shall heaven and earth alike be filled with His glory? So, too, we may indirectly learn from this vivid touch in this picture, that all He hath engaged to do for us, He knows full well and He will perform to the very letter. Readers probably have often observed how, when the Lord came before, little and obscure expressions in remote corners of His Word were brought into prominence, and fulfilled to the very letter.

His appearance as the Sun, again likewise looks at earth's blessing. Surely, every word here coheres with every other in the interpretation that has been suggested, which must commend itself to our judgments as being no forced or fancied one, but the very teaching designed by the Holy Ghost, in proportion as the more readily and perfectly all is fitted together. Now when it is the heavenly glory of the Lord that is the subject of remark, then the language used is such as, of Him as the Morning

Star, or of His glory, "as *beyond* the brightness of the sun." (Acts xxvi. 13.) His feet here resembling "pillars of fire," as though they burned in a furnace, (i. 15,) ominously hint what yet awaits His witnessing and suffering servants on earth, but whom He will yet, as Son of God, deliver from the rage of the Beast, the last Gentile ruler of the world.

His cry, here resembling the roar of a lion, is obviously in allusion to His royal rights; and also, as we learn from Amos iii. 8, is connected with the raising up of His servants, that they may testify thereto. Hence the account in chap. xi. is in due and necessary sequence with this roar of His. Here He calls on His chosen to confess His coming kingdom; there they are seen to be doing so, and suffering in consequence. And this will help us to the clue as to the import of the muttered rumbling by the seven thunders of "their own voices." Just as He prepares to assert His claims, so the rising wrath of the nations finds vent in their muttered growl of rage and only half suppressed defiance. It is like Pharaoh's haughty and contemptuous enquiry, "Who is the Lord?" &c. His royal roar and the response by the seven thunders of their own voices, find an ample commentary in the 2nd Psalm. John, about to record what the seven thunders had uttered, is instructed, "Write them not." But if the word "write" throughout this

book is a call to special attention, as in xiv. 18; so the word "write not" must be construed as instruction to disregard. To the hate and to the threats of their foes, His witnesses are instructed to reply, as He who stood with those of old in the furnace enabled them to do: "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter."

Verses 8—11 scarcely require any help in their elucidation. To John, as a representative man throughout this Book, it is said, "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." The Lord's witnesses in xi. and in xiii. and xiv. do this. That message, as to its import, and as to its utterance of the coming kingdom of Messiah according to Isaiah, Micah, &c., and as such all contained in the little book, is sweet indeed to those who feed upon and nourish their hearts with its gladdening vistas of earthly glory, under the administration of the Son of Man; but then, again, its hearty reception, leading to and constraining them to its bold avowal, is fraught with sorrow dire to those who make it. (Compare Ezek. iii. 8, 4.)

The message itself is, as we see in x. 11, to the world, as well as to Israel. It is His last word through His great long-suffering, ere He descends to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. Identical is the message of the everlasting

gospel, as we shall see upon xiv. 6, 7. For God will bring matters to a very simple alternative, as the reader will see by comparing the beast's threat on the one hand, against every individual who refuses to worship himself, (xiii. 15,) insomuch that all but the elect bow down before him, (xiii. 8); and on the other hand, God's threat against all who do so worship him, (xiv. 9, 10.) Not only will God's true earthly people cling to the hope of a coming Messiah and Deliverer; but, as we learn from Matt. xxv., the test of the King on the throne of His glory, whereby He will judge the nations, will be as to whether they sided with His earthly brethren in the day of their tribulation, or no. (See also xi. 9, 10.)

At the same time, the message of His servants is primarily towards the nation of Israel itself. So, too, Moses and Aaron, who were sent to Pharaoh and his people with the mandate, "Let My people go;" were yet also sent to Israel, that they might learn that their cry had come up to God, and that His promises to Abraham He had not forgotten. And so, indeed, the reader will find frequent allusion in divers intervening chapters to the Lord's deliverance of old by Moses and Aaron. Thus, for instance, His people are regarded as if again they have got back to "Egypt," (xi. 8); not literally, of course, for the land of their bondage is termed "Sodom"

also. Presently ensue the last vial judgments, which are in part parallel with the plagues of Egypt. Also the waters of the mystic Euphrates are dried up, in order that, as we are expressly informed, "the way of the kings from the East may be prepared." Here the parallel is further, in part, continued with the drying up of the Red Sea and the Jordan. I join these two waters together, for there will be no long forty years' experience of the wilderness in between these two, when grace begins to have its way towards that people beloved for the fathers' sakes. The fall of Jericho will be found to have its counterpart in the fall of the mystic Babylon, when once the Seventh Trumpet has been fully sounded, when once the Seven Vials have been poured out. (Compare Rev. xix. 1—4 with Exod. xv. and Joshua vi 20.) And the gathering together of the kings at Armageddon, (xvi. 16), that is, the city Megiddo, to defy the Lord to His very face, as we shall see they will for a moment dare to do in xix. 19, this has already been rehearsed in some degree when the kings fought against Israel in Joshua's time. (See Joshua x.) And, finally, the personal intervention of the Son of God is the sequence divine and full of the day of Midian. (Read Isaiah ix. 3—7 and Isa. xi. 4, and compare Judges vii.) In fact, all those Divine interventions for Israel of old were only, as it were, rehearsals in part of His great future interposition in Person for them.

It will be perfectly understood by the reader that I am not at present attempting to expound the prophecy of the drying up of the mystic Euphrates, or of the fall of the mystic Babylon. Very great and solemn truths, which closely concern ourselves, we shall find to be taught in these said prophecies. My only object above has been to trace an analogy more or less complete of God's ways in the future with His ways in the past.

But here, however, though still only in the midst of the inspired sketch of this action of the Lord in x., xi., we had better pause, having reached the end of our chapter.

LECTURE XI.

CHAPS. X. & XI.—“THOU MUST PROPHECY AGAIN.”

“THE VISION IS FOR AN APPOINTED TIME; THOUGH IT
(OR “HE,” Heb. x. 37,) TARRY, WAIT FOR IT” (HIM).

Habak. ii. 3.

(CONTINUED.)

BUT who are these said witnesses? And why are they two, and two only? And what is the character of their testimony? And what becomes of them? These and such like questions naturally occur to the mind as one reads in chap. xi., as to what are the object and issue of that gracious intervention of the Angel of the Lord in chap. x., on which we have already meditated. For that the vision is continuous, and therefore one in chaps. x. & xi., is evident from the general continuity of the entire account; from these witnesses being raised up by this mighty “Angel,” who speaks of them as “My two witnesses,” and to whom He gives power; and—not to mention further proof—to Whom, after they have been slain and raised, they are caught up into a cloud, or as it should be rendered in ver. 12, “Into (τη) THE cloud :”—that cloud,

of course, in which He had been seen at the beginning of chap. x. Thus the definite article connects the close of this account of the witnesses' history with the beginning of the scene in chap. x.

Here, again, it will be well to begin with Christ. All our mistakes arise from taking our eye off Him. We cannot understand this book if we ignore its own statement, that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Now these two witnesses—whoever they are—are compared to "the two olive trees, and to the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth" (chap. xi. 4). Here, as any one can see, the reference is to Zech. iv., where also we have these identical double symbols. Now we have an inspired appendix, referring to this vision in Zech. vi. 9—16. This appendix explains * why the olive trees and

* It may help some readers if we here epitomise the teaching of the first part of the prophecy of Zechariah, which reaches to the end of chap. vi. This part comprises eight visions, with an appendix. The first vision is contained in Zechariah i. 7—17. This is introductory. Its subject is, Israel in honour, degraded, and ultimately restored. The first horse is ridden by a man or angel, and represents Him who is Israel's true King. The other horses are without riders, to symbolize the brutish force that marked the Gentile powers. There is nothing here to stand for the fourth Gentile empire. Kimchi says this is owing to the distance off from when this prophecy commences, of its rise as a world-power. Anyhow, it is found in the sixth vision. He also says that the myrtle trees sym.

candlesticks are in pairs, namely, as representing the priestly and royal offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, when, as the true Melchisedek, "He shall be a priest upon His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Now at the time of this prophecy Joshua was the type of Him as the Priest, while Zerubbabel was His type as the

bolize Israel, and that the expression, "In the bottom," means "In Babylon." The angel of the Lord on the first horse is probably the same angel as in Dan. x. In fact there seem two personages here: one called a man (ver. 8), who is yet the "Angel of the Lord" (ver. 11); and the other the angel that talked with Zechariah. If this be so, it remarkably accords with the line of truth already traced out, as found in Dan. x. (See page 172). The second vision (chap. i. 18—21) represents the same divine Friend of Israel (though as four, as in the gospels and cherubim) opposed to that nation's Gentile foes. The third vision contained in chap. ii. predicts that Jerusalem shall yet be re-established, and her foes by Him disposed of. The fourth vision is in chap. iii., and is a beautiful and most instructive picture of the final justification of Israel, who are represented by their high priest Joshua. The fifth vision (chap. iv.) treats in due course of the communication of divine power, and the application of the Spirit to Israel's actual condition. The sixth vision (chap. v. 1—4) shows the curse lighting on sinners, be their name or self-esteem what it may. The seventh vision (chap. v. 5—11) discloses the judgment of the multitude. They may call themselves Israel; but God shows they belong to Babylon. (Here compare Rev. xi. 2.) The next vision (chap. vi. 1—8) is the eighth or octave of the first;

Ruler or King. So of old, His two witnesses were Aaron, in the one character, and Moses, "King in Jeshurun," in the other. *

Here then, most undoubtedly, we have the reason why the Lord's witnesses, at the period contemplated in Rev. xi., will be two. They will testify that the time for the Lord to interfere as Israel's Priest-King

to which it adds one additional fact, viz., here the second symbolic chariot has settled God's controversy with the first. For the Persian had, in Zechariah's day, put down the Chaldean. Then, lastly, in the appendix to these eight visions, and which is contained in chap. vi. 9—15, Zechariah is instructed to set crowns on the head of the high priest, in the presence of certain returned captives, and to address him as type of the Branch Christ. Thus this appendix seems specially to refer to chap. iv., and if so, then verse 13 reveals why there is mention of two olive trees, and of two candlesticks.

* Scripture has many double types of Christ, so many, indeed, that it is superfluous to enumerate them. For the glory of Christ is such, and His characters so complex and double, that one type by itself would oft convey but a very inadequate expression thereof. But the idea in the combination of the two offices of Priest and King is (firstly) the representation of the people before God, and again of God before the people. Likewise (secondly) Christ was perfectly separated from the earth as Priest; therefore, as King, He is fitted to rule it. The combination of these two offices has often been attempted by wicked men, and notably in the Papacy. The result is apostasy. But the true Church, in association with Christ and in God's time, shall be seen to be made "kings and priests unto God."

has drawn near. I do not dispute that the number of those who confess His name, and His twofold office, will be very attenuated, and that that number, according to the requirement of Deut. xix. 15, must be at least two. Still, however, this explanation does not appear to me to exhaust the meaning implied in that number being just "two." Feeble and few as His servants will then be, there yet appear in the front some two as sent specially by Him, as was the case when He interposed for their deliverance of old.

For further, *Elias* will be present at this very time ; probably, therefore, he will be one of these said two witnesses. For to his sort of work, and of testimony, such as they were before, this chapter, in its account of these witnesses, markedly adverts. "These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy"; and again, "If any one will injure them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies"; surely these are allusions in part to what Elijah did before. And hence the passages almost amount to a distinct assertion that he will be one of these two special witnesses. So God had promised: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Malachi iv. 5.) But if he will be thus "sent" by the Lord at this very period, and if the work of the witnesses will greatly resemble his

as it was of old, surely it follows that these will be at least *specially* two individuals. Besides which, the false prophet, the antichrist, who will also be on the scene at this same time, will imitate Elijah in one of his greatest signs of old. For so we read, "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." (Rev. xiii. 13; and compare xi. 5.) Will not this action of his be owing to his being animated by the same spirit as was in the magicians when they resisted Moses by doing as he had done? Nor is Matt. xvii. 12 any valid objection to this argument for the personal return of Elijah. For Matt. xi. 14 shows that John the Baptist was not actually Elias. For had he been Elias in very deed, then, whether the people received him as such or not, would not have altered his personal identity. But since Christ says, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias," He implies that only "in the spirit and power of Elias" had John come, and as the angel had declared. (See Luke i. 17.) Add to which, that when the Baptist was asked whether he were Elias, he at once replied in the negative. Putting all this together, I cannot resist the conviction that in Rev. x. and xi. is fulfilled the promise of Malachi iv., and then the second period of his miraculous operations will exactly correspond with a notable period in his work of old. (James v. 17 with Rev. xi. 3.) With regard to the

other witness, some have thought he would be Moses, and others, Enoch. The character of the testimony in chap. xi. much resembles what had been entrusted by God to Moses aforetime. Thus "these have power over waters, to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth (or land) with all plagues as often as they will," (chap. xi. 6.) Now there can be no doubt that the Transfiguration in Matt. xvii. was designed of God as a prophetic representation of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This we are assured of in 2 Peter i. 16—18. But on the holy mount with the Lord, were beheld two men in glory, and those two were "Elias with Moses." And if the Transfiguration contemplates a moment subsequent to the time when these two witnesses, having been slain, were raised and caught up into the cloud to their Lord, then the two pictures harmonize perfectly. I do not wish to imply that Moses on the mount was actually in his resurrection body. The contrary is the fact, for Christ is the first-fruits in resurrection. In all things that blessed One must have the preeminence. He is the true wave sheaf (Lev. xxiii.) But still the vision in Matt. xvii. may look forward proleptically to the resurrection time. As the whole was a panorama of the time when the kingdom shall be set up in power, and as the Lord was then manifested for a moment in His coronation robes as King of Glory; so it is no strain if we conceive of these His servants

and witnesses—for such they are even at the Transfiguration—as in this prophetic action, in the same triumphant period too. And thus we see why the literal body of Moses was then required. And hence the obscurity in Jude (verse 9) is removed. To the devil then, resurrection, as God's grand secret, was unknown; but for the glory of the Lord Jesus, it was necessary that Moses should be present, aye, and in his body too, though still a mortal body, as was that of Lazarus after his resurrection. Here again we see, that if we keep His glory in view, all is plain. Also we see why there was some mysterious care with which God had buried Moses. (Deut. xxxiv. 6.) For that body in its mortal form would be required fourteen centuries after, that he might be present when the kingdom in vision was to be displayed; and would be required again, still in its same mortal guise, when with Elias he should, some twenty centuries later still, be sent to Israel a second time. Thus Moses and Elias between them, will restore all things; will recall the godly remnant to the ordinances that God gave them, and specially to that law which, though Christians are not under, will yet be written on Israel's heart. (Heb. viii., and compare Rev. xii. 17 and xiv. 12). How wonderfully Scripture fits and dovetails all together!

If any should incline rather to the supposition that the other witness is Enoch, who also, as well

as Elijah, was taken to heaven without dying, his notion cannot be disproved. His prophecy of the Lord's coming preserved to us by Jude, is very striking and very complete. It even assumes the rapture as an event already past at the period to which he points—"Behold, the Lord has come among his holy myriads, to execute judgment upon all," &c. Some definite and worthy object God must have had in view, in that patriarch's removal from this earthly scene. He could not have been so translated because he was holier than all others; for this view would surely make heaven to be the reward of human merit. Besides which, an Elisha, or a Daniel, though evidently favoured men, were not similarly removed; and John the Baptist, than whom, as the Lord testifies, there had not risen of woman born, a greater prophet, suffered unto blood.

However, be the second witness who he may; of the one, as long as we can read Malachi iv., there ought to be no doubt. One may object that it is degrading to these personages, to conceive of them as being on the earth again to die, and that after having been with God at rest. But I reply, Is it indeed degrading the servants of God to suppose that they will have the opportunity afforded them of witnessing unto death for the Lord whom they love? Is there even an angel in heaven who would not be glad of such an honour being accorded to him? It is

true the Church is to be removed before the great Tribulation ; but this is because her period of service and of confession is now. And her's is a much greater honour still ; for to her it is given not to be deceived by the specious evil all around her ; but to believe in her Lord as exalted into the very highest glory, and to bear the cross after Him even now ; whilst yet the non-beholding Him as there, and the non-perception of how truly, though with Judas' kiss, He is hated now, would save her from much suffering, and procure her all worldly ease. Otherwise, to endure the Beast's wrath for testimony to a coming Messiah, is an honour indeed. Truly Moses and Elias have been for a long while with God ; but Moses had seen God "face to face" even before he died in the land of Moab. And Christ Himself was slain even after the wondrous Transfiguration glory. So likewise, when these have completed their testimony, they shall be slain and raised again, and caught up into the cloud with the Angel-Lord, and in the sight of their foes too.

Yet some will receive their testimony. This which indirectly will be, as we have proved, to the world at large—which is only another Egypt on a vaster scale (x. 11 with xi. 8)—will be designed, of course, more particularly for Israel, and to assure their hearts that the God of Abraham has not forgotten them—that the book of His promises to their fathers

is spread before Him. And even when we specially name Israel, we must bear in mind that they are "not all Israel that are of Israel." The great majority of this nation, too, will worship the Beast—the great Roman emperor. So Dan. ix. 27. "He" (that is, the Roman "prince that shall come,") "will confirm a * covenant" that he will make with them "for one week," for seven years. Then only the elect remnant will be preserved by God, (Matt. xxiv. 21). These will form, in Christ the true Vine, the nucleus of the new nation of Israel. The others all will be confounded with the Gentiles. This distinction between the old nation of Israel and the new—between the spurious and the true—between the formal, ritualistic worship of nominal Jews, and the broken-hearted, penitent, spiritual worship of the few, and who will be so much cheered and helped by

* There is no definite article to the word "covenant" in the Hebrew of Dan. ix. 27. Its insertion in the translation has led many into the mistake of supposing that the pronoun "he" referred to Christ, instead of to the prince that shall come. And let the reader note how, over and over again, one week of the seventy weeks is severed from the others. Then in the midst of the week, that is, for forty-two months, he, the prince, will cause by force the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and his own image to be worshipped, (Rev. xiii.) ; until that which is determined by God shall be poured upon the desolator, i.e., this prince—the Beast.

the Lord's two witnesses,—this distinction is drawn in xi. 1, 2. For the use of the reed like unto a rod, that was given to the seer, with the instruction to measure the temple of God, is to separate and perfectly to mark off between those that serve God from those that serve Him not. These separated and railed off ones are that new "nation" of whom the Lord speaks in Matt. xxi. 43. Whilst the others are all of that old unbelieving generation, or rather "race which shall not pass away," which will continue in their sin, and in their rejection of Messiah, even unto these very days, (Matt. xxiv. 34). The former, God's poor and needy ones, resting on God's Word, shall be preserved from this evil generation of infidel Jews for ever. (See Ps. xii. 5—7.)

In ver. 13 of our chapter xi., we read that in "the same hour" in which the two witnesses, having been slain, are raised again and called up to heaven, there ensues "a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand." In these words there may be some allusion, in the way of contrast, to the seven thousand reserved by God, when Elias witnessed for God in Ahab's time; but of this I am not certain. But the others here called the remnant, are certainly the ungodly. For when it is said they give glory to the God of heaven, their praise is only extorted; for the character of the true witness for

God at this time, will be not so much that He is God in heaven above, as that the earth is His also : so we have proved at page 192, on x. 6 with xi. 4. These want to be left alone on earth, when Messiah is coming to claim His rights there.

I pass now from the subject of these two witnesses, and of their testimony, with one practical remark—one that may be of great use to us all. It is this : we learn hence that whatever witness God may give at any time, He measures its fulness exactly. And generally speaking, from a worldly point of view, it is of a feeble and despicable sort. But if it is rejected, He will most surely reckon with men about it,*

The remaining verses of our chapter xi. 15—19 are an epitome of the concluding chapters of this book, even reaching unto the end of the millennial age. Now this rapid summary of the subsequent

* I have not thought it needful, in the above remarks on God's testimony through His two witnesses to Israel, to distinguish between His way with the ten tribes and His way with the other two. Because such distinction is not suggested in our chapter xi. But however, to those who would meditate on this variation in His ways, I cite Ezek. xx. 34—38, where His future mode of dealing with the ten tribes is opened out. For the ten tribes are not so culpable as are the two, in regard to the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore they will be treated differently.

judgments is here inserted, because the three next chapters, viz: xii.—xiv., are one entire parenthesis, wherein the picture of those times is sketched from quite another point of view. For those said three following chapters might be well entitled, “The account of the great Tribulation.” Here the sorrows of GOD’S OWN EARTHLY PEOPLE are set forth. But in the other chapters, those outside this parenthesis, we have God’s hardening judgments upon His FOES. So utterly different are the lines of truth inside and outside this parenthesis. Thus chapter xii. discloses to us the prime agent and the secret cause of the great Tribulation to be Satan, who, consequent upon the rapture of the man child, the mystical Christ, or Christ and His body which is the Church, into the heavenlies,—will then be finally expelled by that triumphant Church therefrom. Then chapter xiii. traces the subsequent workings of that cruel adversary against Israel, and all who will then on earth fear God. And in chapter xiv. we behold the out-comers from that great Tribulation. It might even be well for those who desire to understand this book, to make some mark as an aid to their memory, and whereby they might at once recognize that these chapters xii.—xiv. were parenthetical. And then in xv. the original and main subject is continued precisely where it is left off at vers. 14, 15 of chapter xi. And thus, even as after the sixth Seal, the continuity of

the narrative was interrupted by chapter vii., wherein God's predestinating and thoughtful care for His own was revealed to us : and THEN, in chapter viii. the judgment of the seventh Seal, which is sub-divided into the seven Trumpets, is at once proceeded with ; so here similarly again, as soon as the second woe, which is the sixth Trumpet, has passed, the sequence is again interrupted, except, I say, the brief summary of all the remaining judgments in verses 15—19, and there follows the parenthesis of xii.—xiv, giving in full the account of the great Tribulation on the Lord's beloved earthly people, with their salvation out of it. After which, in xv. we have the seven sub-divisions of the seventh Trumpet, in the judgments of the seven Vials. Surely this singular and beautiful arrangement of this book, whereby is set forth the watchfulness of God as to His own who trust in Him, all this is most touching. At the same time, it is absolutely necessary for us to trace this peculiar feature in the structure of the book, or otherwise its perfect method we shall not perceive.





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