

NOTES
ON THE
BOOK OF
REVELATION

by

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ERRATUM

- Page 25 Ch. 6 Line 10 from top, 'subduing' (not 'subdoing')
Page 73 Ch. 19 Line 8 from top, 'here' (not 'her')
Page 75 Ch. 20 Line 8 from bottom, bracket before 'for'
Page 76 Ch. 20 Line 21 from bottom, 'about' (not 'avout')
Page 88 Ch. 22 Line 10 from top, 'the' (not 'thd')
Page 91 Ch. 22 Line 4 from end of the book, 'the' (not 'he')

A gift on behalf of the author: at the same time a souvenir of very happy fellowship.

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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CHAPTER I

Wm. A. Stewart

In writing upon this wonderful book I wish to express that I have drawn much upon the labours of gifted servants of God, and have incorporated, with the help of God, much of the truth as I have been enabled to grasp it. In reading this book, it is well to bear in mind the difference of John's ministry as here given, to that of Peter and Paul. Paul was much used of God to make known the heavenly mysteries in connection with the body of Christ, and to reveal the heavenly portion of the church of God. Paul was the minister to the uncircumcision, and his sphere of work was among the Gentiles.

Peter was called to minister to the circumcision, the Jews, and the special sphere of his labours was at Jerusalem, where he remained with the other apostles even after the scattering brought about by the persecution of that time. There was also a close linking up with the temple worship, but as time developed the breach widened but it was not until Jerusalem was destroyed that the last link with the nation of Israel outwardly was broken, and ceased to exist.

The special sphere of Peter's ministry passed away, but John's ministry carries us on to the coming of Christ, to the appearing of Christ in power and glory to set up His kingdom.

This doubtless was what the Lord referred to when He could say in answer to Peter's questioning concerning John. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me". John 21:22.

While to Peter, the Lord gave a special commission that he should feed the lambs, also the whole flock, yet John's ministry was to go on, and carries us on to what takes place even after the church has been taken to heaven. We have a foreshadowing of this in the last two chapters of John's gospel.

In the striking scenes there enacted we have a foreshadowing of the gathering in of the Jewish remnant as expressed in Thomas, also the gathering in of the nations during the millennium.

John first presents the assembly of God gathered together with Christ in the midst, then the conversion of the Jewish remnant as seen in Thomas; lastly, the gathering in of the nations, after the kingdom has been established in power.

We have these three things also revealed in the book of Revelation.

It has been pointed out, that prior to Christianity, Judaism, with Jerusalem as its centre, was God's candlestick upon earth, and this was symbolised by the seven branched candlestick of the tabernacle and temple. Israel was God's witness, and was chosen, and set by God to be a testimony in the world as to what God was, as revealed in the nation of Israel.

We know how grievously they failed, and were brought under God's judgment, and finally removed, especially with the destruction of Jerusalem. This was also true in reference to the church, which had become the pillar and ground of the truth.

As to outward testimony, we are shown its spiritual decline, first seen in Ephesus, and ending with its entire rejection in Laodicea. In reading the book of Revelation, we are made to feel the need of spiritual understanding, in order to be able to rightly grasp the true import of the varied symbols.

Only God's Spirit can enable us to rightly divide the word of truth, and this is true in a special way in the study of this book. Some may, and have, sought to shun it as being beyond them, but we need to remember that there are special blessings promised to those who read, hear, and keep its sayings (V.3). There are also judgments pronounced upon those who seek to tamper with its message.

It is essentially the revelation of Jesus Christ, not merely revelations about Him, although of course we have these, but it has to do with the revealing of Christ in power and glory. The first eight verses serve as an introduction to the whole book.

Here Jesus Christ is viewed as a man, the man of God's counsels. That He is truly divine also our book clearly shows.

As a man He has been despised and rejected of men, but in this book He is shown to be the Head of all things.

The manner of communication is different to that which we have in the gospels or the epistles, where we have the Father's love revealed, also our relationship as children, with the communion of the Holy Ghost.

In Revelation we have a certain distance, as signified by the angel being used as the medium through whom the Lord reveals these things to His servant John.

“Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw”.

The word “and” should be omitted, as the things he saw was in reference to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and is not an additional thing.

It is remarkable that not only is a blessing pronounced in V.3, but again in the last chapter we are told “These sayings are faithful and true”. “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophesy of this book”. Rev. 22 : 6, 7.

Not only is there a blessing upon the reader but also upon the hearer (1 : 3.)

Ofentimes the saints of God have been unable to read God’s word for themselves, especially when the scriptures could only be read in Greek or Latin, but they could hear God’s word from the lips of His servants.

There have been the illiterate even in latter years, when the scriptures have been translated into our own tongue, who have never learned to read; even these can hear the word of God from the lips of others, and share the blessings which result from obedience to the things read and heard. Then the time was said to be at hand, or near.

Nearly two thousand years have passed since the Lord died, but His coming has ever been presented as the immediate hope of the church, and this is to be followed by the things recorded in this book.

There are many things written in common with Daniel, but whereas Daniel was told to seal up the book, for it was to be many days before there would be a fulfilment of what had been written, John is told on the other hand, that the things were at hand, or as our first verse tells us, must shortly come to pass.

It is not that many of these things directly concern us personally, but they do concern the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we are reminded of the Lord’s words in John 15 : 15. “Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth : but I have called you friends : for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”.

The Lord counts upon our affections : that we should have an interest in everything which concerns His glory. Thus Abraham was told what God was about to do with Sodom, although it did not affect Abraham personally, but it made him intelligent as to his prayers for others. In verses 4-7 we have the salutation of John to the seven churches which were in Asia.

While we have grace and peace as in the epistles, yet there is a great difference in the manner of salutation. In the epistles it is generally from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here it is from the One who answers more to the name of Jehovah, although with some difference.

Jehovah expresses His continuous existence, “Who was, and is, and is to come”.

Here it is from Him “which is, and was, and which is to come”. His present existence is first brought before us, but this is the One who had revealed Himself in the many precious promises given in the past, and Who would fulfil them in the future to the very letter.

It was also from the seven Spirits which are before His throne. In the epistles, and especially in Ephesians, we have, one Spirit in connection with the one body.

Here it is seven Spirits which are before His throne.

It is the one Spirit in His varied fulness of operation.

It is the same Spirit in the fulness of spiritual activity, as seen displayed in the seven churches.

The throne speaks of the government of God, and it is in reference to this that the Spirits’ actions are seen.

Lastly it is from Jesus Christ, because here it is in reference to His rightful claims over the earth.

He is not presented here as the Head of the church, but as “the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth”.

He is the Prophet, Priest and King.

None could ever be called Faithful and True but Him.

This is the name by which He is called in Ch. 19 v. 11. He was the true Prophet, Who not only revealed God's word, but Who himself was the revelation of that word (see John 1:14). Our Lord came for the purpose of witnessing for the truth and never deviated from that purpose.

It is said in 1 Tim. 6:13 that He witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate.

He could also say in John 18:37 "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth".

In resurrection He is the Priest, not as the high priest of old who offered many sacrifices, but as the One who gave Himself once for all as the sacrifice for our sins.

He is the first begotten of the dead.

The firstborn had a special place in the family: so the Lord Jesus, as the first begotten of the dead, is the High Priest in glory.

"Also I will make Him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth". Psalm 89:27.

He is also the Firstborn of those who will be raised.

He is, too, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the One who has power and authority over them.

The presenting of the Lord in this way, at once leads John, on behalf of the saints, to break forth in a song of thanksgiving and praise for all He had done for them, although here in reference to the kingdom, and not to the body or bride.

We have here the highest possible praise as regards the glory and position in which His love has set them. "To Him who loves us" for so it should read. It is a love which is continuous, a love which has already revealed itself in what it has done for us, and which never ceases. "Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end". John 13:1.

He has washed us from our sins, but it is in His own blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin". Nothing else than the precious blood of Christ could ever cleanse from sin.

And made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.

The thought is doubtless taken from Exodus 19, but whereas the Jew could only enter into that position on the ground of legal obedience, the church of God enjoys that place on the ground of pure grace.

King and Priest are the highest characters of the Lord Jesus in this book.

Nearest to God in power downwards, and approaching Him upwards.

Such is the place which is also given to us.

It is after the order of the Melchisedec priesthood.

But the saints of God would take no glory to themselves, but would say "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen".

Then in v.7, we have the appearing of Christ.

It clearly has no reference to the rapture, our gathering to Christ, but more to His appearing to execute judgement. "Every eye shall see Him".

This is in distinct contrast to the present day of grace. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

In reference to the believer's hope, it is not said that He comes with clouds, although we are caught up to Him in the cloud. It was a cloud that received the Lord out of the sight of His disciples.

The cloud is a marked symbol of the divine presence, but this is different to the plural word clouds. The coming with clouds invariably has to do with the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ to execute judgment. Every eye, would doubtless embrace both Jew and Gentile. The world, as such, has never seen the Lord since His death.

Here He is to be made manifest to all.

Those who pierced Him, refers more especially to Judah, who had been guilty of crucifying Him.

The kindreds of the earth would doubtless embrace all the rest of the tribes of Israel, but may go wider and embrace the whole earth, or world, as may be shown by the concluding words "Even so, Amen".

"Even so" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Amen. In v. 8, we have God revealed as the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty".

In Chap. 22:12, 13, Alpha and Omega are titles which are distinctly applied to the Lord Jesus.

Here in our first chapter God and Christ are indistinguishable. Other scriptures show that all God's promises have been made in Christ, and that He is the Amen, showing that all will be fulfilled in Him.

As is well known, Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, while Omega is the last, so that it embraces all that is true of Christ, or of God as manifested in Christ.

As we have said before, the form of Jehovah as used in this verse is different to the Old Testament form, "which was, and is, and is to come".

Here we have the present "I am", but shown to be the One in Whom all the promises of the past have been made, and in Whom they will yet be fulfilled.

The final inclusion of Almighty or Shaddai reveals God as the Accomplisher of divine promise, and was the name by which He was revealed to the patriarchs of old.

In v.9, John, although an apostle, terms himself a brother; also he recognises that there were others in the same path of affliction as himself, hence he speaks of himself as a companion in tribulation.

This has no reference to the great tribulation which is to come upon the whole world, but simply refers to the tribulation which was the common lot of the christian at that time. He speaks also of being in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

The kingdom and glory was yet to come.

As Christ waited in patience, so John, who formed part of Christ's kingdom, waited in patience.

Here we are shown that he was a prisoner in the isle of Patmos, not as an evil-doer, but for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

This may be taken in two ways.

He was a prisoner on account of his preaching of the word of God, and in consequence of the testimony he had rendered to Jesus Christ.

But also he was a prisoner set there in the purposes of God that he might bear testimony of the word of God, and of Jesus Christ, as recorded in v. 2.

We see the same thing in principle with the apostle Paul. Severed from the ministry he so loved, he was used of God to write to various assemblies that he could not visit, and in the providence of God these epistles, or at least many of them, have been preserved of God to us in our day.

So also with John: God had purposed that he should be alone in Patmos, but alone with God, in order that he might there receive this wonderful revelation with which the church has been enriched for all time.

As J.N.D., in his synopsis so aptly says, "God's ways are behind the scenes, but He moves all the scenes He is behind". Had John tired of the fellowship of God's people? Nay, doubtless his thoughts were always with them, and his prayers ever ascending to God on their behalf.

This was true in a special way on the Lord's day referred to in v.10. That day was the first day in the week, the resurrection day, the day when the disciples came together to break bread, and thus remember with living affection the dying love of the Lord Jesus. Absent in body, His spirit was ever with them.

It has often been pointed out that the Lord's day has no reference to the day of the Lord, but was the first day of the week. "I was in the Spirit of the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet". V.10.

This infers that something of great importance was about to be communicated to him.

"What thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches".

That which he saw in the vision is more especially in reference to the Lord Jesus.

The word "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last," should be omitted here.

I have often thought of the over-ruling providence of God, both with John and Paul, that while they were prisoners, they should have had the opportunity of writing as they did, being provided with pen, ink and writing material, also that they should be able to send to the churches in the way they did.

There were seven churches in Asia chosen by divine wisdom, with various traits marking them, which the Spirit of God could use to set forth the church of God in its various stages throughout the whole of its period upon earth.

When John turns to see the voice that spake with him he sees seven golden candlesticks.

The figure is doubtless taken from the tabernacle, only that while in the tabernacle there was one stand with seven branches, here we have seven separate lampstands so that the Lord could stand between them.

These represent the assemblies as light-bearers, and the place the Lord Jesus has in the midst of them.

We have not here the infallible body of Christ, but the visible external assembly which can, and will, be removed when it ceases to give light.

These lampstands were all of gold, for they were of divine origin, each having been set there as light bearers by God Himself: such was their responsibility.

In the midst of these lampstands John sees One like unto the Son of man. It is not said that John sees the Son of Man, but one like unto Him.

We may well ask in what way this one was like unto the Son of man.

John 5, may give some light upon this passage.

As Son of God, He was the One who quickened, or gave life, He Himself being divine; but as Son of man He executes judgment, all judgment being committed to Him, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father; and so here in Revelation. He is presented in the character of the Son of man because He is about to execute judgment upon the seven churches. He is not seen so much in the character of Son of man in service for His people, but more in the character of a judge clothed with a garment down to His feet expresses dignified priestly judgment, the girdle of gold symbolizing divine righteousness. The girdle is not about His loins, but about His paps or breast.

I have thought that this may express a similar thought to what we have in Ch. 3 v.19.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten".

The Lord loves His people too well to allow sin to have a place unjudged, and if He rebukes and chastens, it is in perfect love, as well as in perfect righteousness. In the further description given in verses 14 and 15, we have characteristics which mark Him as the Ancient of days. In Daniel the Son of man is brought to the Ancient of days, but later it is the Ancient of days Himself that comes. Here in Revelation, the Son of man is shown to be the Ancient of days.

He who is presented first as a man is seen by John to be the Eternal God.

We have a similar thought in Psalm 102, 23, 27: "He weakened my strength in the way: He shortened my days". God's answer is "Thou art the Same, and thy years shall have no end". The head is the seat of wisdom, while the head and hairs being white as wool and snow may express His purity of judgment. The eyes of fire express piercing discernment to deal with evil. His feet as fine brass shows His firmness in putting down evil, and His righteousness in dealing with man in responsibility. The brazen altar, also the laver, were of brass, expressing God's righteous claims in respect to evil.

The altar itself set forth God's claims, and the sacrifices offered upon it could alone meet those claims, and so also with the laver. The laver itself revealed uncleanness, but the water was there to cleanse from defilement.

"His voice as the sound of many waters".

This expresses His power and majesty.

The majesty of His voice is mightier than many waters (see Ps. 93, 4). V.16 shows that He has perfect power and control over the stars, which v.20 declares to be the angels or messengers of the churches.

"Out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword".

As in the first creation He spake and it was done, so here, He judges by His word all who do not obey His word.

He has but to speak the word, and the blow is struck when it is a question of executing judgment upon evil.

His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. In the transfiguration we read how His face shone as the sun. There he was shown to be supreme in glory, but here in Rev. 1, it is in reference to His authority to execute judgment. The angels, or messengers of the churches, as represented by stars, being subordinate to the Lord, as instruments of heavenly light. As in the transfiguration, the disciples were overcome by the manifestation of such glory, so here, when John falls at His feet as dead; but that right hand, which speaks of power, is placed upon His weak servant to support him, while the Lord's word comes to him in all its sweetness saying "Fear not".

This Person of such majesty and glory was the One who could say "I am the first and the last, and the living One: and I was dead, and behold I am alive

unto the ages of ages : and I have the keys of death and of hades". Verses 17, 18 (Kelly's Trans.)

There is no rebuking here of the attitude of worship taken, for although John has seen One like unto the Son of man, yet that same One was Jehovah, the Eternal God. The power of such a one sustains the saint, but does not destroy him.

He was the One who had suffered death, but who had been raised from the dead, and Who now lived to die no more. As the mighty Victor He had the keys of death and hades. The order of these words as given in our authorised version is a mistake, for hades follows death, and never preceds it. "Write therefore what thou hast seen". (Kelly).

As we have already seen, this relates to 1 : 9-18. The things that are, has reference to the whole history of the church upon earth as set forth by the seven churches of Asia as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3.

The things after these; after the history of the church on earth, commencing with Chapter 4, and having reference to God's dealings with the world after His dealings with the church has ended.

In this book of prophecy, the rapture, or translation of the saints to glory, takes place between the 3rd and 4th chapters. For this reason the scene is changed from earth to heaven, and the voice is heard saying "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter".

The word mystery occurs about 27 times in the scriptures, and record truths which were previously secret, but which still retain a supernatural element.

So angels here are mystical representatives, not actually seen.

It is so used of Jehovah, also of a child (Matt. 18) also as spoken of Peter (Synop. J.N.D.).

It is the assemblies that are here addressed. "What the Spirit saith to the Churches", but it is through the medium or messenger, the angel.

CHAPTER II

In this chapter and the following one there is a distinct message to each individual church mentioned, but there is a voice to the saint of God who has ears to hear, which is profitable for all times.

It is important to note that we have what the Spirit saith to the churches, and not merely to an individual church, although there are some details, which have a special application to particular churches at that time, but also in these messages there is a suited word for the saints of all times.

There was in the first place that which applied to each individual church, but as we may see later, these churches were selected by God's Spirit, and various traits pointed out in a way which sets forth the history of the church on earth from about the year A.D. 96, the year in which John wrote, even to the end of its history on earth. We have a similar thing in reference to the words of the prophets in the Old Testament.

There was often a direct message from God in reference to the state of the people at that time and a near fulfilment of the prophets' words, but this was given in such a way, and often with added details, which could only have its application to the latter days, and that after the church's history upon earth. So here in Revelation there were many things which marked these individual churches, but they are recorded in such a way, as to have their application to the whole church in general, and that at various periods following one upon another.

This we may see as we review the various messages of these two chapters.

Ephesus gives the general state of the church as it existed about A.D. 96, the time when John wrote to them. Smyrna, the period of the great Roman pagan persecution which lasted to about A.D. 315.

Pergamos shows the church settled down in the world where Satan's throne was, after the professed conversion of the great Emperor Constantine about A.D. 316-500. Thyatira presents the papacy, developed out of the Pergamos state, in which we have Balaamism (worldliness) and Nicolaitanism (priestly assumption).

Again, as Jezebel brought idolatry into Israel, so Romanism wedded Christian doctrines into pagan ceremonies. The period of Papal sway lasted from

A.D. 500 to A.D. 1,500. In Sardis we have the Protestant reformation, or rather that state into which it lapsed after the first great work of God's Spirit.

This covered the period A.D. 1,500 to A.D. 1,800.

In Philadelphia we have that which bears, more or less, a clear testimony to the word of the Lord, and the Name of Christ; this has been most marked during the nineteenth century. Last of all we have Laodicea, with its spirit of indifference. This trait marks so many in this twentieth century. It is remarkable how closely this review is linked with that of Matt. 13, where we have the various phases of the kingdom set forth in so graphic and complete a manner in the seven parables. So in the book of Revelation we have seven churches taken up as giving spiritual completeness. These are the things which are, and which end with the history of the seven churches.

Ephesus gives us a true picture of the general state of the church at large, at the time of John's writing of this book.

It is the only church of which we know any details of its founding.

It was here where Paul, also Apollos, laboured, and this assembly had been the recipient of the highest truths ever uttered.

When Paul wrote his epistle to them, he could speak of them as being faithful in Christ Jesus. Ephesus means desirable, and truly this expresses the Lord's love for this church, but their elevated position only made their fall so much the greater, when it could be said of them that they had left their first love.

Now John addresses himself to the angel of the assembly at Ephesus.

This word must not be confounded with the spiritual beings we know as angels.

As before stated, it means a messenger, or representative of the assembly, a brother who occupied a responsible position, and who was destined to guide the assembly in spiritual matters. While the message was communicated through the angel, yet the message was not to an individual as Paul's epistle to Timothy or Titus, but was the Spirit's message to the assembly.

This is recorded at the end of each message, 2,7; 2,11; 2,17; 2,29; 3,6; 3,13; 3,22.

Being addressed through the angel denotes a certain distance, and not the close intimacy that had existed in the days of Paul.

Power may be lacking with the assembly, but it is not lacking with the Lord.

He holds the seven stars in His right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. It carries quite a different thought to what we have in Matt. 18, 20, where the Lord Jesus is found in the midst of those gathered to His Name. Here in Revelation He is watching, and ready to judge evil that may be tolerated in the assembly. There may be much which is commendable to the outward eye, even as there was here.

"I know thy works". This is repeated in each and every address but with striking differences.

Here there was labour and patience, and no toleration of evil.

They were not deceived by the pretensions of some who claimed to be apostles, but were not, and they had proved them to be liars. They had borne and had patience, also for the Lord's sake they had laboured and not fainted.

Only the Lord could judge these things at their true value. Nevertheless, He could say, I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

The word somewhat should be left out here.

It tends to give the impression that it was only a small thing that the Lord had against them, whereas it was a matter which was of the greatest importance.

Where the heart's affections were true to the Lord, everything else would be in its right place, but where this was lacking everything would come short.

Even in Old Testament times the principle was the same. "Son, give me thine heart": if God had the heart's affection everything else would follow in its right order.

We might well ask, what produces this love in the soul?

It is the true sense of the Lord's love for us, in all He has done for us, and what He is to us now.

We love Him because He has first loved us.

Here they are reproved for leaving their first love.

There is a danger of keeping the letter of the word, but failing in the spirit of it.

They who hold the truth as to Christ's Person in true heart affection will be sustained by Him who is the truth.

Of Ephesus, to whom the highest truths had been revealed, the Lord has to say, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent".

As a servant of the Lord has truly said, the removal of the lamp stand does not imply that the church might not go on apparently as before, but that it had lost its place as a trustworthy witness for the Lord.

There is no evidence that this church, or the church at large did repent, and get back to their first works.

Hence the call now comes to the individual, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". How we are reminded of Paul's last word to this church when they saw his face for the last time. "I commend you to God, and the word of His grace".

So here, the individual who has an ear to hear is exhorted to listen to the Spirit's message to the churches.

As we have already said, it is not to one message alone that the saint of God has to listen, but to the whole of the messages, and, as we are shown elsewhere, to the whole word of God. It is not here a question of giving heed to the church's teaching but of turning to the word of God, even when the church of God, as a whole, has failed.

But to return to v.6, here we are reminded that they were one with the Lord in the hating of the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. It is thought that the essence of this evil seems to have been the abuse of grace, to the disregard of even moral practice, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. To tolerate evil on the ground that no man is free from sin, is to continue in sin that grace may abound, and this is clearly condemned in the scriptures of truth.

What is referred to in v.6, as deeds, had developed into a doctrine in the church of Pergamos (see v.15).

In verse 7, there is a promise to the overcomer, and that in spite of all the failure that had come in.

In the paradise of Eden, man had been tested and had fallen, but now it is no longer the garden of Eden, but the paradise of my God.

Into this, redemption brings us, neither is there any tree of responsibility that would tend to bring sorrow and death. The tree of life is there, which the glorified saints will enjoy in peace.

No evil is allowed to have a place there, neither is there any temptation to be feared.

As to the general state of the church what a contrast is to be seen. As set forth in Ephesus, the church as a whole, has departed from its first estate; there is a lack of the love which first marked it, but whom the Lord loves He chastens. Hence we see in Smyrna, the fiery trial of persecution which was allowed to come upon them, and this doubtless for the purpose of purifying the saints from the state into which they had lapsed.

Smyrna is said to mean myrrh, a spice whose fragrance is only fully brought out upon being crushed. So it was with the church at this time when they were passing through the terrible persecutions of the pagan Roman empire. In the first place, it is important to note the way in which the Lord is revealed to this church.

He is the first and last, showing that He is divine, but He is also seen as the One Who was dead, but Who is alive again, as we so often sing in truth, "The union of both joined in one formed the foundation of love in His heart".

He Who is divine, having neither beginning nor end, is the same One Who has become a man and died, but Who has been raised from the dead, and Who now ever lives unto God.

What comfort such words and thoughts could prove to these suffering saints of God.

He lacked no power, yet as a man He has Himself trod the same path of suffering.

Did it seem that the Lord had forgotten His own in the great trials through which they were passing? Nay, He says, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty", but, He adds, "Thou art rich". "While Christ is rich, can we be poor"? Christ who for us has died".

Their very poverty in this world should remind them of the riches in glory which was theirs in Christ Jesus. They would surely be reminded of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, though rich, for their sakes became poor, that they through His poverty might be rich. The Lord also knew the blasphemy of those who claimed hereditary rights of the Jewish nation, but who proved by their works that they were of the synagogue of Satan.

The tribulation which came upon the Christians at this time, was not the great tribulation which is to come upon the whole world.

Here it came upon the Christians; it was the saints of God who were being persecuted.

Linked with this persecution was the poverty which marked them.

We need to remember that it is the poor of this world, rich in faith, that the Lord has chosen, also the same thing may have marked them as it did the saints of Heb. 10, where we read they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that in heaven they had a better and enduring substance.

But, the Lord says, "Thou art rich".

They may be poor and despised in the eyes of the world, but God had chosen them, and made them rich in faith, and given them to be heirs of the kingdom which He had promised to them that love Him.

We have a striking contrast in Luke 12, of a man who was rich in this world's goods, but who was not rich towards God, also we have his end. Here the Lord's word to His own is, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" v.10. "All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution", was Paul's words to Timothy. This then is the day of suffering, and the Christian is not promised immunity from it.

Imprisonment would also test some even as it would Paul when he could say, "Bonds and imprisonment abide me, but none of these things move me". They failed to turn him aside from what he felt to be the path of obedience.

This was seen even to greater perfection with the Lord Himself in His last journey to Jerusalem. The ten days of tribulation doubtless refers to the great Roman persecutions under ten of its persecuting rulers.

These approximately were as follows: Nero, about A.D. 54; Domitian A.D.81; Trojan A.D.98; Atoninus A.D. 117; Severas A.D. 195; Maximim A.D. 235; Decius A.D. 249; Valerian A.D. 254; Aurelian A.D. 270; Diocletian A.D. 284. It is remarkable to note that nearly all these rulers met with a violent death, and with death the loss of their crown. The Lord's word however to His own is, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life".

That many suffered thus, and won the martyr's crown is evidenced in the words "Faithful unto death", inscribed so many times in the inscriptions found in the catacombs of Rome. There is a precious promise to the overcomer that he shall not be hurt of the second death.

The first death may sever many ties of earth, but it is in reality a servant of the believer, being that which brings him into the presence of the Lord, neither will he ever be separated from God as the unbeliever.

To the unbeliever death is truly an enemy, because it is that which brings him into judgment.

Satan's effort, as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, failed to stop the testimony, hence in Pergamos we have him introduced as an angel of light, seeking to corrupt that which he had failed to destroy. The word Pergamos is said to mean both marriage and devotion, but with the church at this period it was not true devotion to Christ.

With the professed conversion of the Emperor Constantine the church received imperial favour.

The church became married to the world, and was elevated to the throne.

Thousands of Roman soldiers were even baptised, but it is to be feared it was into imperial favour and not really unto Christ.

The same word is used in the original to denote seat or throne, but here it clearly has reference to the throne.

It is the place where Satan has authority, for the whole world lies in the wicked one.

There was that which the Lord could, and did commend, that they held fast the Name of Christ, and did not deny the faith, but this was all. This was

evidenced in the death of the faithful martyr Antipas. This man was faithful unto death, striving against sin. There is nothing further known about Antipas than is here recorded, but it is a great thing that God has been pleased to place his name on record with His manifest approval of his faithfulness.

Then in v.14, we have the things which the Lord had against them.

There were those among them who held the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

God had shown that they were to be a separate people, and were not to be reckoned among the nations. Balaam, by his wicked device of linking the children of Israel with those of Moab, thus corrupted the people whom he had failed to curse.

So in like manner with the church we are considering. By their act of linking themselves with the world they had become guilty of spiritual unchastity (see James 4, 4). There were also among them some which held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing the Lord hated. Here again there was an advance of evil. In Ephesus we read how they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, but now this goes further and deeper, and was even held as a doctrine. It was a corruption of grace, a turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness, a toleration of evil in the lives of God's people.

But the Lord was not indifferent to this evil, hence there is a sharp word of warning, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth".

Doubtless there were many who were free from this evil, but while the exhortation to repent is to the church, yet it is not said He would fight against the church, but against those who held these doctrines. The sword of His mouth is clearly the word of God. Elsewhere it is spoken of as the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (see Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). If the church would not deal with those who practised such evils, the Lord Himself would deal with them.

I Cor. 11:32, tells us "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Thank God there are always individuals who have an ear to hear, even when the church, as a whole, has so grievously failed.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it". V. 17.

Here it was a question of overcoming the evil that had come into the church in reference to its association with the world.

Such overcomers may be despised, and made to feel abased in the world, but their thoughts are directed to Christ Himself as the One who had walked this scene as a perfect man in true humility before God. To enter, in any measure, into the depths of His perfection, one needed to be consciously found in God's own presence. It was the hidden manna that was taken and placed in the ark to be an everlasting memorial before God. There will be the beholding of Christ's glory, but there will also be communion in reference to His life as lived here as a man among men.

The temptation in Pergamos was to eat of things sacrificed to idols, but there was nothing to satisfy the longing of the godly soul, but in the hidden manna there was that which would suffice to satisfy the needs of all, because it spoke of Christ as the living bread which came down from heaven.

Black and white stones were largely used to decide guilt or innocence.

The white stone here referred to would be a token of God's approval and favour, because of faithfulness to Christ.

The new name written is a secret between the giver and the receiver, and expresses the individual joy and communion which is made good to the soul by Christ Himself.

The joy of having His recognition and approval will be a rich compensation for all that has been endured for Him here.

When we come to the church of Thyatira we have, as another has pointed out, an important change of arrangement.

In the first three churches the call to hear comes before the promise, and is addressed to the church at large, but in the last four the call to hear is to the overcomer alone, for only such are expected to have an ear to hear.

These are signalled out from the rest, and a remnant seems to be more and more clearly indicated. The name Thyatira is said to be taken from two words meaning "sacrifice", and "a continual offering of the same".

If this be correct it foreshadows in a remarkable manner the continuous sacrifice as expressed in the mass of the church of Rome, where Christ is presented as being sacrificed not only for the sins of the living, but also for the dead.

The ruling power of this church began about A.D. 500, and continued in power up to the time of the reformation about A.D. 1500, although as a system it is viewed as continuing with the three succeeding churches to the end.

The Lord's coming is presented in one form or another in this, and each of the following churches. The way in which the Lord is presented to these churches is very important.

Here it is as "the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass. As Son of God He alone is the giver of life, and only he who has the Son has life.

The assertion of the church of Rome however is that salvation is only to be found within the Roman church, and that there is no salvation outside of it; that to be excommunicated from that church is to be deprived of salvation and every spiritual blessing.

The church of Rome claims power over body and soul, but Heb. 3 :6, speaks of Christ being Son over His own house; and while the assembly is responsible to deal with evil because of the presence of the Lord in their midst, yet it is only according to His own word and authority, that they can act in any way.

The church, as seen in Thyatira, may tolerate evil in its midst, but the Lord Jesus will not.

His eyes pierce like a flame of fire to discern evil, and he has the power to deal with it, for righteousness becomes His house for ever.

That there were real devoted souls there in spite of the general corruption which marked this church, none can doubt, and the Lord could, and did, recognise all that was done in true devotion to Himself.

"I know thy works, and love, and faith and service and thine endurance, and thy last works to be more than the first." N. Tr.

It may be questioned as to how the Lord could approve of so much in the midst of a church which had become so corrupt, but we need to remember that in the darkest day there has ever been a remnant who have feared God, and these are recognised of God as forming the true church. It was the same in principle in the darkest days of Israel's apostasy. When all Israel seemed given up to Baal worship, and it seemed as if Elijah was standing alone, yet we are shown that he was not alone, for God had reserved to Himself seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

So again with the coming of the Lord Jesus in grace. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God".

These were they of whom the Lord Jesus could say that they had continued with Him in His temptation, who, though a little flock, were not to fear, for it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. Some have inferred that v.19 would show the Lord's approval of the popish doctrine of works by which a man may acquire merit before God, but the context of the verse proves the reverse.

Works are here accompanied by divine love, which is the very essence of the divine nature within.

Then we have service, followed by faith which works by love; then patience, or endurance, and the abounding in works. These things have ever marked true servants of God especially in dark days, and when persecutions have been rife. Then it was truly a time for works and not merely words. Many were cast out of the church, but love led others to receive them, even as the Lord Jesus was ready to receive and identify himself with the man who had been blind, and who had been cast out of the synagogue because of his faithful testimony.

Then was the time for true service, and the need of faith working by love, especially when it was considered a crime to harbour a so called heretic.

Oftentimes it meant the loss of property as well as liberty, but when faith was so tried it invariably stood the test, and good deeds abounded rather than diminished. Then the Lord turns to those who were responsible in this church in reference to the evil allowed "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee,

because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols". Here we have a clear reference to popery, and the reference to Jezebel is most striking.

Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, who was himself responsible to rule for God, but we find that Jezebel had assumed responsibility, and usurped authority, and that she became the idolatrous corrupter of all Israel, adding also violence to corruption when her wishes were opposed, being filled also with bitter hatred to those who sought to bear witness to the true God.

The grave error here was that the church itself assumed the place of teacher, instead of being guided by the infallible word of God.

This has ever been the great controversy with Rome, who claims infallibility, and that her word is final and irreversible.

Can we wonder that when the light became darkness, it became so dense in its darkness.

The very guard that God had given against the acceptance of evil when He says, "Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good", could only be the living word of God, but this was withheld from the people, so that there could be no entrance of God's word to bring light to the people.

Instead of separation from the world, God's servants were seduced to commit fornication, also to eat of things sacrificed to idols.

Here fornication has to do with illicit intercourse with the world.

Idolatry also has a large place in the worship of Rome, especially with the introduction of mariolatry in which Christ is displaced from having the first place, and which is instead given to Mary.

"And I gave her place to repent, and she willeth not to repent of her fornication (N. Trans. Kelly).

This shows that Rome, as such, is past redemption, that her will is opposed to repentance as here commanded by the Lord Himself.

In verses 22,23, we are shown the great judgments which will come upon her and her children, if they repented not of their deeds.

There are not only those of the dark ages when Rome ruled supreme in power, but there are also the children begotten, who will continue even to the end. "And all the churches shall know".

Here it may suggest that God's hand had already struck the blow from which she has fallen from her place of supreme power, but it also looks on to the final judgment when God will render to every man according to his works.

Then in v.24, we have the remnant marked out, "the rest in Thyatira".

These had not known the depths of Satan, or of sin, as others say.

This remnant had doubtless held themselves aloof from the corruption within, and had sought to separate themselves from its evil.

Such were charged by their enemies as being under the power of Satan, heretics who had to do with the very devil himself, but they had the Lord's approval, that He knew all about them.

Now they are exhorted to hold fast that which they had already, and that until the Lord Himself came. There was no hope now of the recovery of the outward church as such, but there is a path marked out for the faithful.

It is a path beset with evil, and they needed the word to "hold fast" and not give up.

How long is this to continue? some may have asked, and the Lord says, "Till I come". He sees their toiling, and knows their difficulties as none other, but He will come to them at the right moment.

Many of these saints were greatly persecuted as were the Waldenses and others, but they had God's word to cheer and comfort them. If they now suffered with Christ they would also reign with Him.

The nations at that time sought for power and rule and to crush all who would not bow to their arrogant demands.

The Lord's promise to these persecuted saints is that if they kept His works unto the end, He would give them power over these nations.

As associated with Christ they would rule with a rod of iron and their enemies would be broken even as the Lord had received of His Father (see Psalm 2).

"And I will give him the morning star".

Israel was led to look for the Sun of righteousness to rise with healing in His wings, but the morning star is seen before the day dawns.

It is a comfort to the saint of God to know that in the darkest hour the Lord may come, and take him to be with Himself for ever.

Again we have the exhortation "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

How we need to have an open ear to hear God's voice in the scriptures, as that which is dictated alone by God's Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER III

In Sardis we have depicted the state into which the church lapsed after the reformation.

The reformation freed the church from the corruptions and power of Rome, but it soon lapsed into a spirit of cold formalism.

There was no denying of the truths received, but they ceased to have a living power in the soul.

Sardis is said to signify "things remaining", or a remnant. This company, or remnant, is marked out in the few who did not defile their garments with this lifeless formality. At the time of the reformation there was a mighty work wrought by the power of God's Spirit in delivering the church from so many of the evils and corruptions of the Romish church, the civil powers being largely used to bring it about.

Many were content to be ruled by the civil powers as in England, where the ruling sovereign became the recognised head of the English church. In view of all this it is remarkable to note the way in which the Lord is revealed to this assembly.

"These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars".

He is not seen here as walking in the midst of the candlesticks as He was in Ephesus, but He has not given up His claims. The Spirit in His sevenfold perfection of action is here to further the interests of Christ, also the angels of the churches are still seen to be under His control and authority, neither does He yield His rights to any earthly power. Men like Hitler may arrogate this power unto themselves and seek to rule the church of God, but the true saint of God will ever recognise the power and authority of the Lord Jesus to rule His own house, also the true Christian will ever seek to be guided by the word of God.

The Lord Jesus has to say of this church, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead."

It was with them, merely a lifeless profession, and their works were but dead works which did not flow from a divine life within.

They had a name to live, the name as we know, of Protestantism, but this was not sufficient to impart life to the soul.

A man can be a zealous Protestant without being a true christian.

Sardis, as a whole, was found in a perishing condition hence the greater need for the angel of the church to be on the watch, and seek to strengthen the things which remained.

There may be an abundance of works which men may deem to be good, but the Lord has to say of them, "I have not found thy works perfect before God". They had, as it were, been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

What was it that was really lacking? Surely it was the absence of real life in the soul.

They had a name by which they lived, but this was only an outward profession without any inward possession. Therefore in v.3 we read, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent". What was the great thing they received at the time of the reformation

It was the knowledge of justification by faith, founded upon the clear teaching of the word of God.

God's word was heard and received in living faith, and the truth had set them free.

There was now the danger of letting these things slip hence the needed exhortation to hold fast, and repent. If they failed to do so, they would be treated even as the world at the coming of the Lord.

Needless to say, the Lord will not come to the true christian in this way as 1 Thess. 5:4 clearly shows. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief".

There is a remnant marked out in v.4, who were not marked by the general state and condition of the church at large.

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy".

Thus we see, as ever, God reserves a witness for Himself, and His eye is ever upon them, while the promise to such is that they should walk with Him in white, for, as the Lord says in grace, they are worthy.

They themselves would claim no worthiness on their part, but in grace He recognises everything in their lives that has been of Himself, and He Himself will clothe them in white raiment, for only that which has been of Christ will be rewarded, and seen in that coming day of glory.

"And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life". This is very different to the book of earthly profession. Many names there recorded must needs be blotted out as being dead.

Where one has his name written in heaven, in the Lamb's book of life, he has a portion which is eternal and sure.

"And I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels".

What a rich recompense this will be to the overcomer.

To be confessed before His Father as those who have lived and honoured Him upon earth, and this in the presence of the vast angelic hosts of heaven. Joy is manifest in the presence of the angels even now when a sinner repents and turns to the Lord for salvation.

Now they behold the joy of the Lord in the confessing of them before the Father in glory.

Again, those who have an open ear are exhorted to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

In the address to Philadelphia we have a spirit of revival which is truly encouraging after the prevalence of evil, with the spirit of cold formalism which followed so quickly after the reformation.

The Lord is here revealed as the holy and the true. He is presented in this way in John's first epistle. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things".

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 2:20; 5:20). These things marked the Lord Jesus as a man here among men, and was manifest in all His walk and ways, but they are true of His own blessed Person even now.

It is the revelation of the Lord in this way which appeals to the heart's affections of the true saint of God as he seeks in some measure, to answer to the truth as revealed in the Lord's own Person.

They may be made conscious of their own weakness, painfully so, but He has the key of David.

"He that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth".

The key of David represents administrative power, the means of access to whatever He possessed. Thus it is said in Isa. 22:22, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, and he shall open, and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open".

The saints of God may feel so weak as to feel incapable of opening any door in reference to the Lord's work, but here they are directed to look to Him alone as having the power in His hand to open the door, and here we have the assurance that when He opens none can shut, neither can the door be opened which He closes.

There will come a time when He will rise up and shut-to the door.

Many will knock at that closed door, but they will not be able to open it.

It is a great comfort to the saints to know that the Lord can, and will, maintain an open door even to the time of His coming again.

We have no reference to the work of the saints at this time beyond the fact

that He knows them, but we are told that He has set before them an open door which no man can shut.

“For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied My Name” v.8.

The open door may have reference to the great missionary period which has been so marked during these recent years, especially the last 100 years. In spite of much weakness there has been the desire to keep the Lord’s word.

One mark of this has been expressed in the love of the saints one for the other.

It is said that the word Philadelphia means brotherly love, and it is certainly embraced in the loving of one another. There is another thing which marks the work of God among the saints in recent years and that is true affection for the word of God.

There Christ is made known in power to the soul, and the true formative power for holiness of walk; obedience to the word of Christ being manifested in the walk and ways. I speak not of the professing church as a whole, but of the remnant in whose hearts God has wrought so that they seek to cleave to the Lord with true purpose of heart and soul.

In the previous churches we have set forth the condition which marked the church as a whole, but in Philadelphia, and later in Laodicea we have the moral aspects which mark the many or few that are found within the church. As we have before stated, we had, in the earlier churches, one distinct period following one upon the other, yet in the last four, while they follow one another in coming upon the scene, yet they all continue together unto the end.

I feel that we may rely upon the Lord to maintain His testimony upon the earth as expressed in Philadelphia even up to the time of His coming for His people.

Here we have a company marked by the lack of great strength yet who seek to keep His word.

That word is prized by them above everything else.

And hast not denied My Name.

The name is the expression of Christ Himself in His absence, and carries His power and authority with it.

In the first place we have the Lord’s promise that where two or three are gathered together to My Name there am I in the midst of them.

Christ is the true centre of gathering, and yet this is derided by so many professing christians, especially by those who claim successional rights and supremacy in the church of God. To such, those of the saints answering to Philadelphia, would be viewed as seducers, as having seceded from the true church, and as not being worthy of a name.

This has been true in a special way in reference to those known as brethren.

It is well known how mightily the Spirit of God wrought about a century ago, in raising up servants who truly loved the word of God, and who sought to walk in obedience to it. One main feature of this great work was expressed in the desire to be gathered together in, or to, the Name of Christ, and that on the ground of the one body of Christ. With such gathering to the Name of Christ they claimed His precious promise that “where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them”. They also recognised that He was in their midst as the Holy One and the True, and that His table should be kept free of evil, and that because holiness became God’s house for ever.

As time went on, dissensions even among brethren began to arise, and soon there was a rending of saints by painful divisions, which further deprived the saints of much of the strength which they had acquired, and left them in much brokenness and weakness. I remember, as a young man, how thankful I was that I had been converted among brethren, and that I had not to separate myself from the systems of men as so many others had been forced to do.

Yet as time went on, and I learned of the many divisions which had taken place among brethren, how sad I felt, and how much I wondered as to whether I was with the right company of brethren.

I remembered too, how 1 Cor. 7 :23, 24, was brought home in much power to my soul especially v.24, “Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God”. I realized that the direct application of the scripture was in reference to the call of God, whether to those in slavery or in freedom, but for me, the principle remained the same.

If the Spirit of God had gathered me to Christ, and associated me with a particular company of saints who were seeking to walk in obedience to His word, there it was my place to abide, and seek to strengthen the things which remained.

True, I felt there was a guard as to the toleration of anything evil.

“Let everyone that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity”.

Henceforth I was not troubled as to who was right and who was wrong, neither did I feel that our company, that is the one I was associated with, comprised Philadelphia to the exclusion of all others. That I felt I was in the right place was evidenced by the fact that I remained among them, but I feel there is much to humble us so that there should be no room for pride.

In spite of all the failure which has to be so greatly deplored, yet the fact remains that there are many among us who have a real desire for the word of God, and who still seek not to deny the worthy Name of Christ. They may be despised by the ecclesiastical rulers and even be persecuted so far as the law permits, but this does not prove them wrong.

Here we are shown that those who cling so much to the Jewish order of things, in their sacerdotal orders, their rites and their ceremonies, with their robes and so called sacred buildings, will be made in a coming day, to come and worship before the feet of these Philadelphian saints, and be made to know how much the Lord had loved them. Thus the order, in that day, will be reversed. Those who have exalted themselves will be humbled, while those who have walked humbly before God will be exalted. Thus God would encourage the true saint of God to go on, even in the path of rejection, even as did their Master before them; to know that He fully understands, and that they have His approval, and also the conscious sense of His love towards them.

Verse 10 seems to be connected with the previous verse. They had kept the word of His patience.

Paul's prayer for the saints of Thessalonica was that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ.

The Lord Jesus waits in patience at God's right hand, and so the saints of God are to wait in patience, and that in obedience to His word.

In Rev. 1, we are told that the saints are in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

Because they had kept the word of His patience, they themselves would be kept from the hour of temptation which was coming upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Here it does not merely refer to the inhabitants of the world but to those who are marked out as earth dwellers. This is the character of those we read of in v.9, who were of the synagogue of Satan, and it will mark many in a coming day who seek to shut God out of their thoughts, and claim the earth for themselves. There is a promise here given that they would be kept from the hour of temptation and that in contrast to the godly Jew who will be kept in, or through it.

Like as Enoch was taken before the flood came, and through which Noah passed, so the saints of God will be caught up to be with the Lord before the unbridled powers of evil are loosed upon the earth. This hour of temptation goes out wider than the Jewish tribulation of Matt. 24, which is confined to Jerusalem and Judaea.

There are many who affirm that Christians will pass through the great tribulation, but our verse declares definitely that they will be kept from it. The saints may have much to endure, and suffer for His Name's sake, and in their weakness they may feel that they will not be able to maintain the honour due to the Lord in obedience to His word, but here the Lord would seek to hold out a word of cheer.

“Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”.

They have the truth of God to hold at all costs, especially the truth as to the coming of the Lord, and the Lord would seek to assure them of His approval and reward, Thus He would encourage their hearts. The crown is His reward for faithfulness shown to Himself in this scene.

Are they made to feel that they have little strength? The Lord says, “Him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God”. A pillar is an emblem of strength, while the temple is connected with worship, while the fact stated that he will go no more out suggests that it is permanent and not given to change.

This is in striking contrast to all that marked them in this scene.

“And I will write upon him the name of my God”. This expresses all that God is as revealed in Christ and made known in His word.

“And the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God”. Here we have the display of God’s glory as revealed in the church in her glorified condition.

“And I will write upon him my new name”. This is a name which was not revealed to the Jewish nation, neither is it known according to the flesh, but it is only known in resurrection.

In everything the saint is associated with the Lord Jesus, hence the special force of the word “my” which is used four times in this verse.

Then in closing there is a further call to him who has an open ear to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches, John was but the channel through whom these messages were given, otherwise it was the Spirit’s message to the churches.

When we come to the last of the churches, that of Laodicea, what a sad picture is presented to us. In the first church we saw the decline of the hearts’ affections, a leaving of their first love. In this last church there is no heart at all. The professing church has gone from bad to worse, despite intervals of spiritual revivals, until at last it becomes nauseous to the Lord, so much so that He threatens to spew it out of His mouth.

The way in which the Lord is presented here is remarkable. “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” v.14. These things express what the church should have been for Him.

2 Cor. 1 :18-20, gives us the key to the meaning of the word Amen. There we are shown that Paul’s word in his epistles was in truth God’s word, even as the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among them was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea.

For the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

If this church of Laodicea had failed to present Him in this way, yet the Lord remained unchanged, and He would vindicate His own name.

In Him would be the fulfilling of all God’s promises. Then He was the faithful and true witness.

This was in striking contrast to the church of Laodicea which had proved to be such a false witness for Him.

It was clearly God’s purpose that the church at all times should be a true witness for Him as we see expressed by the candlestick in Chapter I.

2 Cor. 3 :3, expresses a similar thought where the apostle says, “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ”.

They could boast how they were rich and increased with goods, and that they needed nothing, whereas their Master had been poor for their sakes, without even a place to lay His head.

Then again the Lord was said to be “the beginning of the creation of God”.

Adam was the head of the first creation, but by reason of sin he has been set aside, has been superceded by the second man, the Lord from heaven.

He is the beginning of a new creation of which every believer forms a part, for if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, which is all of God, and created in true holiness. How little the church of Laodicea answered to these things, but in Christ all are secure.

In v.’s 15, 16 we have the Lord’s scathing announcement of what He would do to this church.

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth”.

Although bearing the name of Christ, yet this church was marked with such a spirit of indifference as to be intolerable to the Lord Jesus.

It has been truly said by another, “It would not renounce Christ, would keep up profession, but would sacrifice nothing for Him.

It would keep the church’s place and credit, yea, claim it largely on many grounds as a body; but spiritual power, in individual association of heart with Christ, or trouble for Him, was gone”.

As to the time when this church would be spewed out of the mouth of Christ we are not told here, but we know it will not be until after the true church, composed of all true believers, will have been taken to glory.

As to the way in which this takes place we are not told here, but we know from other scriptures that it will meet its doom at the hands of the civil power of Rome. But not one true believer will be left in the professing church when this takes place, but the Lord pronounced the judgment upon this particular church in John's day, when they were neither cold nor hot.

They once had the warmth of God's truth, neither had they then lapsed into open apostasy, but a spirit of lukewarmness marked them, and it was this which was so hateful to the Lord.

They could say, in their self complacency, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing", but, the Lord adds, "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable and poor, and blind and naked" v.17.

As we have already said, what a striking contrast to the Lord Jesus whom they professed to serve and follow. When here in this scene He was poor and needy, wandering as a homeless stranger in the world His hands had made. Rich in this world's goods, they lacked the true riches. Clothed with affluence, and everything the world approved of they lacked Christ and the spirit of Christ, hence God saw them as being wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Yet the Lord does not give them up while there is any hope of recovery.

"I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thy eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" v.18.

Gold is here used as a symbol of divine righteousness, while the white raiment speaks of the righteousnesses of saints as shown in Chapter 19.

They also needed the unction of the Holy Spirit to enable them to see things in God's light.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent" v.19.

To the end of the previous verse the Lord had been addressing the angel of the church, but now He views the possibility of individual believers being found in this corrupt assembly.

It is never said that the Lord Jesus loves the world much less that which is spurious, in that which bears His Name, but He loved the church and gave Himself for it. When it is a question of the world it is God's love that is presented as in John 3:16.

The saint of God may be linked with much that the Lord disapproves of, but he never ceases to be the object of the Lord's love.

This love will not excuse or overlook any evil allowed, but will rebuke in order to bring home to the soul how much they have grieved the Lord, also He will chasten such an one that they may be made partakers of His holiness. He exhorts them to be zealous, to have a zeal for the things of God, also to repent.

This is not the sorrow of the world which worketh death, but godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.

It was this that Paul sought to produce in the saints at Corinth (see Cor. 7:8-18).

Verse 20, is truly a solemn one, presenting as it does, Christ outside that which professed to be His own church.

"Behold I stand at the door, and knock".

This is not an appeal to the world that the heart may be opened to receive Christ, although it is used so often to this end, but here it is an appeal to any believer who may be found within that church, and who has an ear to hear when Christ calls.

Needless perhaps to say, this call will not come after the true church has been taken to glory for not a single believer will be left here when the Lord comes to gather the church unto Himself.

But until He comes He would appeal to any true believer who may be found connected with the state of things which marks this church.

When the heart's door is opened to Him, He will come into that heart and sup with him, and he with Christ. It is intensely individual, and has no reference to Him coming into the professing church of Laodicea.

Where there is one who overcomes there is a promise made by the Lord to such.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne".

The Lord Jesus has not yet taken His own throne, but sits upon His Father's throne; here there is the promised association with Himself in the coming day of glory, when He will be found reigning in His kingdom. Again there is the final appeal to the one who has an open ear that he should hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, not merely to one church, but to them all. Thus it is clearly evident that these messages to the churches have been recorded, and preserved, for the benefit of the church at all times, and we ourselves do well to give heed to these messages in order that we may seek to shun the evils marked out, also to receive the words of encouragement given.

CHAPTER IV

With this chapter we commence a distinct section of this book. In Ch. 1, v.19, John was commanded, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter", or after these.

The things he saw we have recorded in the 1st chapter, the things which are embrace the whole church period as set forth by the seven churches referred to in the 2nd and 3rd chapters. The things after these commence with chapter 4.

Another fact is quite obvious, and that is that the rapture of the saints takes place at the close of the third chapter, and before the fourth commences.

The church, composed of all true believers, is no longer seen on earth but in heaven, associated doubtless with other saints, for those who are caught up as Christ's at His coming embrace not only the church of God, but all the saints also of Old Testament times.

As before stated, there will still be a professing church upon earth but with this the Lord has nothing to do except to judge it. It had been threatened as we saw in Sardis and Thyatira, but no judgment falls upon it while the true church is upon earth.

These judgments are associated with God's dealings with the earth after Christ's dealings with the true church. The Lord Jesus is no longer seen walking in the midst of the churches upon earth, but as the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

The kings and priests of Chap. 1, are now seen on high. They are in heavenly places, seated on thrones and worshippers. The 4th and 5th chapters are a kind of preface to what follows. We do not enter into prophecy really until we come to Chap. 6. In Chap. 4, we have creation, and the rights of the Lord Jesus as Creator of all things.

In Chap. 5, we have the claims of the Lamb as Redeemer, His rights by reason of redemption.

With Chap. 4, the scene changes from earth to heaven. "After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me".

The first voice here is the same as in 1:10, but no longer was that voice heard on earth but in heaven.

John is told, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter".

In v.2, we have the power by which he is enabled to do so. "And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne". Thus John is taken under the full control of the Spirit of God.

What he sees is no imagination of the human mind, and what he hears is no cunningly devised fable, but both eye and ear are controlled by God's Holy Spirit, and that which he writes is fully inspired or really God breathed. The first thing seen is a throne set in heaven. There was a time when God's throne was established at Jerusalem, but when the city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar it ceased to be God's throne, and the earthly government was invested under the rule of the Gentiles.

Jer. 25:17, shows that it will again be invested at Jerusalem. In the passage before us God's throne is in heaven. Actually God has never surrendered His rights to rule the universe, and Nebuchadnezzar was made to recognise that God ruled in the kingdoms of men, but God does not rule in an open direct way as He will yet do, in and through Christ.

In reference to the throne in heaven everything is according to the pattern of the temple, but the subject here is government.

Here we have the stability of God's throne in contrast to the instability of all earthly thrones. It is not a throne of grace, for there are signs of power and judgment proceeding out of it.

In reference to the Jasper and Sardine we have here divinely chosen emblems of the glory of God. It is not the glory that 1 Tim. 6:16 speaks of, which cannot be seen by the creature, but here it is that which can be seen and even shared.

In Rev. 21, the bride is seen with the glory of God upon her. Her light was like a stone most precious, as a jasper stone. We are reminded of the word of the Lord Jesus in John 17:22, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them". The sardine stone of blood red colour may speak of the redemptive character of God.

These two stones were the first and last in the breastplate of the high priest, these including as it were, all the rest (see Ex. 28). Then we have the rainbow round about the throne, reminding us of God's covenant with the earth.

With the execution of God's judgment upon the earth God set His bow in the cloud as a pledge that He would not again destroy the earth with water. In wrath He remembered mercy, and so it will be in the days yet to come.

He is about to unfold the long series of judgments upon the earth, but He would remind His servant of His unailing promise of blessing. This may be further shown in the fact that the rainbow was seen as an emerald.

As there was the renewed earth following the judgment of God in the flood, so after God has poured out His judgment upon the earth, the world will again be seen in the freshness and beauty of the new earth of which John speaks in Ch. 21. We read in Genesis of the rainbow being given in connection with the renewed earth, but there the beauty of the earth was soon marred by the prevalence of evil, especially with the introduction of idolatry.

This will not be so when God again forms the new heavens and the new earth; that fair scene will be one of eternal beauty and refreshing: I do not refer to the millennial earth, which we know will be followed by destruction by fire.

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold" v.4.

It has been pointed out that this answers to the 24 courses of the priesthood, each with their representative head (see 1 Chron. 24).

These elders are doubtless the royal priests referred to in the 1st chap. and may embrace both saints of the Old and New Testaments.

They are a royal company with priestly prerogatives. They are clothed in the white raiment of priests, but have also crowns of gold.

It has been pointed out that the word seats would better read thrones.

The same word in Greek is said to be used for seats and thrones, and only the context determines which is the better word to use.

It would be out of place to speak of a poor man sitting on a throne, also of a king sitting upon his seat, but reverse them and all is in perfect order.

V.5 reveals God's power in judgment and rule as at Sinai, and reminds us of the judgments which are so soon to fall upon this guilty world.

The seven lamps of fire burning before the throne are said distinctly to be the seven spirits of God. It expresses the perfection of the Spirit's governmental actings in connection with God's throne, and dealing with all that is contrary to God's holiness.

And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal.

It answers to the brazen laver, but has glass instead of water.

There is no cleansing of the feet here for we have a state of fixed holiness, neither is there anything that is contrary to God's holiness.

That which would reveal uncleanness if it was there, also reveals that everything there is according to God.

The four living creatures seem to be supporters of the throne; they are said to be in the midst, as also round about it. They have some of the characteristics of the cherubim, and some of the seraphim, but are different in some respects to both.

They are full of eyes before and behind.

They are perfect in inward perception, also they are enabled to discern everything that would be unsuited to that throne.

Like the seraphim they have six wings, and cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Neither do they rest as do the saints, as set forth by the elders.

They symbolise the various powers or attributes of God. Living creatures better express them than beasts, and the word used here is said to be different to the word used for beasts in Chap. 13.

V.7, describes many of the characteristics of the cherubim while v.8 presents more the traits of the seraphim. Here we have a blending of the two, although as we have said, with some differences to the way they are described in the Old Testament.

In Ezek. 10, we are shown that they were full of eyes, but it is not said within.

There it was to govern what was outside, according to God, and did not express divine intelligence within as we have here in our chapter.

Ezekiel shows them as having wheels as well as wings, there are no wheels here in Revelation.

Wheels were suited to earth, but wings are more suited for the heavens.

In v.7, they symbolise powers, or attributes of God. They are likened to the creatures of God's creation, and embrace the four different species of creation, man, cattle, beasts of the field, fowls of the air.

They express intelligence, firmness, power and rapidity of judgment.

These are powers which belong to God, and are set forth by the work of His hands.

The lion speaks of the great majesty of God. The calf of God's firmness and unswerving purpose. The face of man speaks to us of intelligence. The flying eagle of God's all-seeing eye, and rapidity of action in judgment.

It has been truly said, "They compare with the way the Lord Jesus is presented in the gospels. Matthew presents Him as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Mark as the perfect servant, the great worker as set forth by the ox. Luke presents Him in the character of the Son of Man. John presents Him as the divine Son of God.

In v.8 of our chapter we find these living creatures celebrating the holiness of God.

It is remarkable that here we have the various names of God mentioned which had been revealed prior to the cross, but we have no mention of the name of Father, the name by which He is known by the christian.

Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, were names under which God revealed Himself to His earthly people.

God is truly praised by these living creatures when they give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, but it is not said that they worship as do the elders in v.10.

They "fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created". It is only the redeemed who truly have the mind of Christ and these worship the Creator intelligently as none other ever can do.

There is no mention of the Lamb until the next chapter.

In this 4th chapter God's throne is in heaven, and His creatorial rights are asserted and it is this which is celebrated in this chapter.

CHAPTER V

In the last chapter we had the rights of God's throne in heaven.

God no longer ruled in and through Israel in Jerusalem. With the fall of Jerusalem, the ruling of the world was given over to the Gentiles.

Yet God never gave up entirely the reins of government, but as the God of heaven He ruled in the kingdom of men.

In the previous chapter we saw the celebration of God's rights over creation as invested in the Lord Jesus Christ, Now in this chapter we have the redemptive rights of the Lord Jesus brought before us in reference to His claims over the earth.

His claims are asserted and proved before any judgments are poured out upon the earth to make good those claims. The book here referred to is the book of inheritance, and the figure is doubtless taken from Jeremiah 32. There we are shown that the purchase of the inheritance was subscribed in two books, one open and one sealed.

The sealed book is the contract of the inheritance that is to be given to the man who makes the purchase, and who alone has the right to break the seals when the time came to lay claim to his inheritance.

In reference to creation we know Adam was given the inheritance, but he forfeited his rights by reason of sin, on account of which he became a slave to Satan, who henceforth usurped the right to be ruler of this world. The Lord Jesus came to redeem this right from Satan's hand, and paid the price with His own precious blood. Thus He becomes the great Redeemer, and alone has the rights to claim the inheritance.

In Psalm 2:8, which speaks of the establishment of God's King upon Zion, the Lord says, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession".

Daniel received great prophecies in reference to the latter days, and in reference to Christ's kingdom, but was told to "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end". Dan. 12:4.

Again, when he asks, "What shall be the end of these things"? he is told, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end". Dan. 12, v. 8-9. Here in Rev. 5 we see the book in the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne.

It was written on both sides, showing the fulness of the details of the inheritance, also it was sealed with seven seals. Seven is the perfect number, and this book contains God's ultimate purposes in reference to the earth, but which could only be fulfilled by the breaking of the seals.

Needless perhaps to say, we have no reference here to the eternal purposes of God in reference to the church, which were made before the foundation of the world.

Here it is in reference to the earth and God's claims upon it. A strong angel is heard proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof"? Angels are said to excel in strength, but they are never said to be sealed with the Holy Ghost, who alone reveals the mind of God in reference to Christ.

"And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon" v.3.

Under the earth is not the same as in Phil. 2, where it has reference to infernal beings.

John weeps much because none were found in heaven or on earth who were worthy to open and read the book, or even to look upon it.

John is not viewed here as the beloved apostle with the mind of Christ, but more in the character of a prophet with the enquiring mind so often displayed in other prophets (see 1 Peter 1:10, 11.).

"And one of the elders saith unto me weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" v.5. These elders have the mind of Christ, and are marked for their intelligence.

They at once reveal the Lord Jesus in reference to the earthly purposes of God.

We are told in the epistle to the Hebrews that "It is evident our Lord sprang out of Judah", which tribe was connected with royalty. Jacob, in his

prophecy, could say, "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up; he stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" Gen. 49 :9.

The very next verse speaks of Shiloh, unto whom the gathering of the people should be.

Thus He is clearly set forth as the great conqueror. As being the Root of David, He is David's Lord. There is no reference here to the offspring, to the fact of Him being David's Son.

"Hath prevailed"; surely this is in virtue of Calvary, where His own precious blood was shed.

There He won the great victory over sin and Satan, annulling him who had the power of death, and bringing deliverance to those who had been held in bondage. "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain" v.6.

How these words "in the midst" touch our hearts. We have the same words used in reference to Calvary. There they crucified two thieves, one on either side of the Lord Jesus, and Jesus in the midst.

There He was numbered with the transgressors; not suffering for His own sins, for He had done nothing amiss, but suffering for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Again on the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered together, He was found in the midst, reminding them of His dying love as expressed in the nailprints in both His hands and feet.

But not only is the Lord found in the midst at the breaking of bread, but in Matt. 18 :20, we have the Lord's precious promise, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them".

Here it is especially in reference to the prayer meeting as v.19 seems to show clearly, although doubtless it would be true of every gathering to His name.

In the scripture before us, He is in the glory of heaven, in the midst of the throne and living creatures, also in the midst of the elders.

It is the same Jesus who had been to the cross, and who had lived on high for His people as the sympathizing High Priest.

John had been led to look for the Lion of the tribe of Judah but he sees a Lamb as it had been slain.

He is the great Redeemer, bearing still the marks of Calvary.

He had been set forth as such in the paschal lamb of Ex. 12, and the command, "A bone of him shall not be broken", is applied by the Spirit of God as also referring to Christ.

In the lambs offered morning and evening in the temple worship, God's people were ever reminded of the need of bloodshedding, but these offerings were only of value as being God's provision for the time then present, and that in view of Calvary, as setting forth Christ and His work.

In themselves they could never take away sins, as the epistle to the Hebrews clearly show.

But what the law could not do, God has done in the sending of His own dear Son to suffer and die. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world". John 1 :29.

So here in Rev. 5, while the sacrifice of Christ is not the subject, yet it is the One who has suffered on Calvary Who is the centre of all God's purposes and counsels in reference to the world.

He was crucified through weakness, but now He lived by the power of God, and is here seen clothed with the perfection of power as expressed by the seven horns. There are the seven eyes also which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. The seven eyes are the symbol of intelligence in the fulness of God's Spirit, and that in reference to the earth and its government.

Here the Lord is about to assume the government of the earth, and is invested with all power and authority, but the exercise of this power is by the Holy Spirit. In the seven Spirits of God we have the perfection of the Holy Spirit's administration in government upon the earth.

"And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne" v.7.

The title is His by right of redemption, and He alone has the right to reign over the earth.

This act leads to the prostrating before the Lamb of the living creatures and elders.

In this 8th verse the living creatures appear to be linked with the elders, but when it is a question of redemption the angels are not seen. Here both living creatures and elders fall down before the Lamb.

They are not concerned so much with their own blessing, but are occupied more with the needs and ultimate triumph of saints still upon earth.

“Having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

J.N.D. in a footnote upon this passage, states that the word having, strictly agrees with elders.

If this be so it is only the elders who have harps and golden vials, or bowls as it should read, full of incenses which are the prayers of saints.

Their harps are silent as yet, but they are concerned about the cry of saints who are in dire need.

Here the elders are viewed in the character of priests. It is clearly not their own prayers that they offer to God, for they themselves have no need in heaven. We are not told whose prayers are here referred to, but it is clear that it has reference to the needy saints which will be upon the earth in that day.

These elders then have not to do with their own prayers, but with the prayers of others whose cries they bear up before God.

“And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open its seals; because thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth”. V.9 New Trans.

As another has said, “They are so fully blest that they can heartily rejoice in the good of others”. That they themselves are redeemed and made kings and priests none would deny, also that they shall reign over the earth, but here, earthly saints are more in view.

They have been seen interceding with God on behalf of needy saints; now they anticipate the answer to their prayers in the great redemption wrought by the Lamb on behalf of these suffering saints, If they suffer, they will also reign, not on, but over the earth.

Having forfeited their earthly portion by the loss of their lives, they receive an heavenly one with us, and reign with Christ over the earth.

Then in v.11, we have the introduction of the angelic host around about the living creatures and elders. They form an outer circle; they have not the same place of nearness that the elders have, but they join in their praises of the Lamb that had been slain.

They sing not the song of redemption, for having never fallen they needed no redemption. They celebrate the worthiness of the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

It is worthy praise, and its perfection may be traced to the sevenfold aspect of their praise.

Verse 13 goes even wider, and embraces all creation. “And every creature which is in the heaven, and upon the earth and under the earth, and those that are upon the sea, and all things in them, heard I saying, To Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing, and honour, and glory, and might, to the ages of ages. V.13 New Trans.

“All creation join in one to adore the sacred Name,

Of Him that sits upon the throne and to exalt the Lamb”.

The phrase, under the earth is said to be very different to what we have in Phil. 2.

There infernal beings are indicated, but here in Revelation it is merely creatures under the surface of the earth.

On the earth, and under the earth being used to embrace everything that has life.

Then in our last verse we again find a marked difference, the four living creatures give their Amen to all that has been said, but the elders fall down and do homage. Their hearts go out in adoring worship to the Lamb who has been the central object of praise.

The words, "that liveth for ever and ever", should be omitted, the Lamb being the prominent object before the soul. "Worthy of homage and of praise, Worthy by all to be adored. Exhaustless theme of heavenly praise, Thou, thou art worthy, Jesus Lord".

CHAPTER VI

In this chapter the things begin which are spoken of in Ch. 1, v.9, as hereafter.

The scenes of chapters 4 and 5, are seen to be in heaven. Ch. 6, gives us the first of a series of judgments which fall upon the earth, after the church has been taken to glory. We see "God moving in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform, planting His footsteps in the sea, and riding upon the storm".

Yet as another has truly said, "Gods ways are behind the scenes; but He moves all the scenes which He is behind". The actions of men will be over-ruled to accomplish God's will, the rest will perish and disappear. God is revealed as the Most High, and on His throne is seen ruling in the world, and subdoing all that is opposed to it.

The Lamb, God's Lamb, has the right to the inheritance as shown clearly in Psalm 2.

In v.8 of that chapter we read, "Ask of Me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession". Now, in the present day of God's grace, the Lord Jesus is not praying for the world, but for those who have been given Him of God out of it (read John 17 :9). But the day is soon to come when the Lamb will assert His rights, and lay claim to His inheritance. This is set forth in the breaking of the seals. There are three sets of symbols used in the book of Revelation, the seals, the trumpets, and the vials or bowls. The Lamb is connected directly with the seals, the angels with the trumpets, God Himself with the vials, or bowls of wrath. The seals and trumpets, in the main, do not go on together, but follow each other in succession.

There are many judgments to be executed prior to Him actually taking possession of the earth. Many of these judgments are of a providential character and the Lord is not directly seen in the execution of them although the breaking of these seals are really His work.

With the breaking of the first seal, John hears, as it were, the noise of thunder. Thunder speaks of coming storms, and truly there will be great storms for this poor world, when God begins to speak in judgment.

The four living creatures, termed here the beasts, set forth God's providence in action, and they are seen distinct from the elders, who set forth the heavenly saints. Here it is a call for John to come and see, or really to come, the words "and see", being added by the translators to give force to the passage.

How different is this invitation to that of Rev. 22 :17. There is an invitation for Christ to come for His saints in the first place, then an invitation for the poor thirsty soul to come to Christ.

Here in Chap. 6, it is a call to witness the judgments which are about to be executed upon the world.

We have in what follows, what Ezekiel speaks of as God's sore plagues, the sword, famine, pestilence, and the beasts of the earth.

They represent the providential course of God's dealings, and carry God's voice in them.

Horses are used figuratively in Zech. 1 and 6, but they are used to set forth the great world empires of Dan. 2 and 7, viz.—Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Here in Rev. 6, they speak in prophetic language of the final phase of world dominion by man prior to the millennial reign of Christ.

Horses are prophetic of the human instruments used in God's providential judgments upon the earth in this final phase of man's dominion. A horse then represents that acting of providence which manifests itself in the government of the earth under different forms.

The symbol used may be figurative of Christ as in Chap. 19, or of an emperor or of some one else.

Horses and thrones are both used as symbols to express power but with striking differences.

The horse is taken from its use in war with the object of subduing all opposing forces.

Thrones are used to express dominion and rule over those who have already been subdued.

The white horse of Rev. 19, clearly has reference to Christ coming forth as the mighty conqueror.

In Rev. 6, it has no reference to Christ, but rather to a great conqueror who is marked by triumph and a bloodless victory.

Who this ruler will be may be open to question.

Some have thought that it can have no reference to the Roman Empire, but personally I cannot feel it can be any other than the first beast of Rev. 13.

He has a bow, setting forth his warrior character, and also denoting that his conquest is far reaching. He is not a monarch when he first appears on the scene, but a crown is given him, and he goes forth conquering and to conquer.

He will doubtless be the blind instrument of God's vengeance upon the nations.

He obtains his crown by his own energy and by reason of his strategy, and this seems to be in accord with Chap. 13, where we are told that the kings give their power to the beast. This imperial head of the western empire will be an object of wonder, and the question will be raised, as they view his mighty power "Who can make war with the beast"? Yet, when men are saying "peace and safety", then sudden destruction cometh, and so here.

The opening of the second seal in heaven is followed by a further event upon earth, the living creatures in each instance calling attention to the effect of the opening of the seals. The consequences on earth of the opening of the seals complete the providential plagues spoken of in the scriptures, after which there are direct judgments.

The red horse denotes bloodshedding, the rider having a great sword by which he is enabled to take peace from the earth. So much then for all human efforts to secure peace.

The second horse may be intimately connected with the first horse, and so also the 3rd and 4th.

First there is a bloodless conquest, but this is soon followed by mutual slaughter, the great sword symbolizing the awfulness of the bloodshedding.

Men will seek, by their amalgamations to form a power so great that peace must be the result.

But with the forming of that power there will be another mighty power formed in the north and east to combat the first power, and it is this which leads to the mighty conflicts which take place in and around Palestine, as so clearly predicted by Daniel.

Then in verses 5 and 6, we have famine predicted, that which invariably follows prolonged wars and conflicts. A man's wages will only provide the food necessary for a day. A measure of wheat was said to be the daily allowance of a Roman soldier, hence the difficulty of providing for a household.

The three measures of barley was the daily wage of a common labourer.

Thus the staff of life is sold at famine prices with intense suffering to the poorer classes. The oil and wine are not yet touched; they are the luxury of the rich, who, in time of famine and distress, are invariably the last to suffer.

Then we have the pale horse, setting forth pestilence and death.

We have evidences of this even at the present time on the continent, where hundreds are dying daily from starvation caused by the war, while diseases are rampant on account of malnutrition or lack of proper nourishment.

Closely following these things is Hell or Hades, the place or state of departed spirits, as if, in the striking meaning of the figure, Hades would open her mouth to swallow up those whom death and pestilence might destroy. The four calamities of v's. 8 and 14, peace taken from the earth, famine, pestilences, earthquakes, are in the same order as given in Matt. 24, and are but the beginning of sorrows, neither will happiness again be restored until 1,290 days have elapsed from the setting up of the abomination which makes desolate (see Dan. 12:11). Nothing in the past has ever answered to this, or brought it about.

These judgments fall upon the 4th part of the earth, and not the 3rd, which is an expression used to denote the Roman Empire.

Thus we may gather that these judgments will be limited as to their sphere, and not be universal, and that a part of the Roman earth will not yet be visited. In what follows we may see how God's saints are remembered before other scenes are enacted.

We have no reference here to christians, for at this time they will be in their glorified bodies with the Lord.

These martyred saints demand how long it will be before they are avenged, for here we have to do with a God of judgment.

Being under the altar infers that they had offered their bodies in sacrifice for the truth of God.

The white robes are the witness of their righteousness, showing God's declared approval of them.

It does not denote resurrection, for this we do not get until we come to chap. 19.

They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy, was a divine promise made in reference also to the few faithful found in Sardis (read Rev. 3:4).

Here in Chap. 6, there is a call for vengeance, which is clearly not the attitude of the christian which should ever call for forgiveness.

Doubtless here we have saints from among the godly Jews who will have sealed their testimony with their blood.

After the church has been taken to glory, God will again work among the Jews, and call out a remnant for Himself.

The world will not have improved with the taking away of the church, nay, christians being the salt of the earth, will open the way to further corruption when they are taken from it.

There will be a giving up of God, and an opposing of any and all who fear God, and who testify to His claims.

Many will even be slain although others will be preserved.

It was also revealed to these servants of God that they should rest yet a little season until their fellow servants and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

We read of these further martyrs in Rev. 20:4.

Of that company we are further told that they had not worshipped the beast or his image, neither had received his mark.

This is not said of the company we read about in Chap. 6, so that the first company probably embrace those who are slain during the first half of the week, whereas the second company will be slain during the second half of the week, their great test being in reference to the worship of the image of the beast which will only be set up at the end of the first half of the week. Both these companies will be raised together, and will reign with Christ over the earth.

In verse 10, there was the cry of vengeance.

"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

These earth dwellers are a class especially marked out in the Book of Revelation.

They refer to those who seek to claim the earth for themselves to the exclusion of all that which bears the name of God. In v.12, we have doubtless an answer to the cry of this slain remnant, although probably the full answer will not be given until the Lord actually appears executing judgment. With the opening of the 6th seal there is a great earthquake, and the sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon becomes as blood.

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, etc.

Doubtless this sets forth the mighty convulsions which will come upon the earth or the world, when there will be the over-throw of everything stable.

From Joel 2:30, 31, we learn that these things will take place before the day of the Lord when He comes to execute judgment.

All governing powers are visited, whether it be that which is supreme as set forth by the sun, or subordinate as set forth by the moon.

Also lesser powers will collapse, as set forth by the stars, for we must take these things figuratively and not literally.

For actual stars to come into physical contact with our earth all men of science agree, would be destruction for the earth. V.14, has been thought by some to refer to what we have in Heb. 1:10-14, but a comparison will clearly show that it is not so.

Hebrews refers to both the heavens and the earth perishing in their present form, likened to an old garment. Its present state will have come to an end, and it will be changed; formed into the new heavens and the new earth. This brings us into the eternal state.

This is vastly different to what we have in Rev. 6, for in v.15, we read that as the result of these mighty convulsions, "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".

There is panic and alarm, even as there was with Adam and Eve when God's voice was heard in the garden. A bad conscience veritably makes cowards of all men. They seek refuge from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

There is the greatest fear that the day of the Lord had come, and that He had taken His throne, but when that day actually comes they will be found in opposition to the Lord, and fighting against Him. Here that day had not actually come although the judgments which were being executed were preparatory to the establishing of the kingdom.

CHAPTER VII

This chapter forms a striking interval between the 6th and 7th seals, a parenthesis in which we have revealed God's purposes of blessing in reference to those who will be saved and preserved during the great tribulation which is to come upon the whole earth. Before the great day of the Lord's wrath these are marked out for preservation, to be brought through the great tribulation.

God is about to intervene in a positive manner in judgment upon the sons of men, dealing in a special way with Canaan, as being the centre of the earth, but He will not do anything until He has marked off, and separated, those whom He recognises as His people.

We have a striking picture of this in Sodom in the days of Lot.

That guilty city was marked out for destruction, but before the judgment fell there was the separating and preserving of Lot and his family, and so here in the chapter we are considering. Needless to say, we have no reference here to the church of God, for this is not seen upon earth after the third chapter of this book.

Neither is it exclusively those of the Jewish nation, but it also embraces a vast number from among the Gentiles.

The first six seals have been opened in quick succession, but now there is a pause, and our attention is directed to the purpose of heaven in relation to the redeemed of Israel, also of the great number of Gentiles that will be saved.

They are not yet seen in possession of their blessings, but they are marked out by God for them. In the first verse we have that which is universal, also providential.

We have four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, and holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow upon the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

The satanic power of evil is seen in the wind, but here it is controlled in the providence of God until His appointed time has come.

The angel ascending from the east may not foreshadow the Lord Jesus.

He is truly the day-spring, and as the sun rises in the east, so the Lord Jesus will be seen as the Sun of righteousness, rising with healing in His wings.

However that might be, the power of the angel who displays God's power in mercy is greater than that of the angels who execute judgment.

The power for good is greater than the power of evil. There is to be the sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads, a character is thus stamped upon them as being set apart for God.

The earth here would doubtless refer to the prophetic land of Canaan, while the sea would embrace the unsettled masses of the nations.

The trees may set forth the great ones of the earth as in Dan. 4:19-22; Ezek. 17:31.

No judgment can fall upon the earth only by God's permission, while the government of God is exercised with a view to the blessing of His people. The number sealed is 144,000, of all the tribes of Israel, twelve thousand from each tribe. The number is symbolical as setting forth administrative perfection of government.

As in the days of Elijah, there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so there will be a greater number who will not worship the beast or bow to his image.

These may not all be gathered at the same time, but all are foreknown in the purposes of God, and destined to be preserved for the coming kingdom even as Noah and his family were preserved of God through the waters of the flood. It is striking to note that the name of Dan is omitted here, Joseph being brought in instead. Surely it suggests that idolatry, for which Dan was notorious, will have no place among the godly remnant.

We are not to suppose that Dan will not be finally brought in, for Romans tells us that "all Israel shall be saved when the Deliverer comes out of Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob. Joseph, on the other hand, sets forth suffering and glory.

Only two tribes will be in the land when the Lord Jesus appears in His glory for the deliverance of His people. The throne will be established in power before the ten tribes are brought out of their hiding places. Then they will be brought into the wilderness to be purged even as were the children of Israel in the wilderness after they had left Egypt and before entering the land of Canaan (see Ezek. 20 :33,44; Jer. 30). After this we have a vision of the vast number of Gentiles who are to be saved during the great tribulation, as well as out of it.

They are not said to be seated upon thrones as the elders, but they stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

It is not that they are in heaven, but that there is a closeness to God's throne; they have access to God in heaven.

We have a similar thought in Heb. 4:16, where we are exhorted to come boldly to the throne of grace. These we read of in Rev. 7, belong to an earthly scene and must not be confounded with the heavenly saints who prostrate themselves apart, celebrating the glory of God Himself.

The whole chapter prepares us for what is going to take place, presenting beforehand the elect who will be found there, but whom God will preserve through the great tribulation which will come upon the whole world in the latter half of Daniel's seventieth week, even a period of three and a half years.

They acknowledge God as the God that saves, and are marked out for a special place of blessing, but they are still upon the earth.

The angels who stand around the throne give their Amen to the cry of the white robed throng, ascribing a sevenfold desire unto their God, but here we have no note of redemption for they have never stood in need of redemption, having never sinned.

In reference to fallen angels, those who have sinned, their cause has never been taken up by the Lord, they have been passed by (read 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Heb. 2:16). Then, in answer to the wonder of John, for we do not read of him raising any questions, "One of the elders answered, saying, unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes and whence came they?" V.13.

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest".

In these elders we have a distinct company in heaven, distinct not only from the elect of Israel (v. 4-8), but also from the white robed Gentile company referred to in verses 4-8, also 14 to the end.

They are those who have been taken up by the Lord to the glory, and are among those who are Christ's at His coming.

These include the church, but embrace also all Old Testament saints.

They are intelligent in the things of God, and this is recognised by John when he says, "Thou knowest". In the answer of the elder we are left in no doubt as to whom this white robed company refer to.

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb", v.14.

It should read, the great tribulation, for it only has reference to the great tribulation of the future, which is to come upon the whole world.

When applied to Israel in their land, it is spoken of as the time of Jacob's trouble.

The Lord Jesus shows that the tribulation of that day will exceed anything that has preceded it, or that will yet follow it.

Matt. 24, shows the Jewish aspect of it, reference being made to the sabbath, also to Judeaa, as being its special sphere.

Here in Rev. 7, those who come out of the great tribulation are Gentiles.

They are a class apart, and distinct from the saints of the Millennial reign, to whom tribulation will be unknown, but who will be in a fixed position of grace before God.

Of course they will enjoy later the millennial blessings. The white robes indicate a moral suitability to their position. They had maintained practical holiness, but the blood of the Lamb formed the true foundation of their blessing. "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (or tabernacle over them). It is not that they are found in the glory of heaven, but that they have a conscious sense of being before God's throne.

It is in marked contrast to the heavenly saints, who are set forth by the elders who are seated upon thrones. The temple also presents an earthly scene, and in which they have a priest's place of service.

As Anna of old, they ever have access to God.

God also will be a tabernacle over them even as He was over Israel of old.

This will give to them a sense of security even as it did with Israel.

Then we have the Shepherd care of the Lamb over them. This looks on to the recompense of reward.

Although on earth, yet their blessings are of the highest order, and similar to those enjoyed in the eternal state. They may have been hungry and thirsty even as the Jewish brethren of Matt. 25: 34-40, but now they are fully satisfied with God's living bread.

There are also the fountains of living waters where they can be refreshed for ever.

Again God is revealed as the God of all comfort. God would dispel, as another has said, in the souls of those that are His, the dread of His majesty by the thoughts of His gentleness and meekness. There is the wiping away of tears, marking the gentleness and tender care of God over those who are the objects of His affection.

CHAPTER VIII

The seventh seal is distinct from the six previous seals, neither is there any judgment resulting as with the previous seals.

The first six seals have reference to preliminary judgments which doubtless constitute the beginning of sorrows, whereas the last seal introduces that period of tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world.

With the opening of the seventh seal there is a pause, silence in heaven for a half hour, as though God would linger before striking the awful blows which must fall.

Under the seventh seal the trumpet judgments are revealed.

God is about to intervene in a more direct manner, and to announce Himself by means of the trumpets. Trumpets were used on national occasions in Israel, for the gathering together of the people, also to sound alarms in time of war.

Here they are used to symbolise the public announcement of judgment.

The seals were, in the main, general in their application. The trumpet judgments are more severe, and are, in the main, limited to the third part of the earth, that part over which the Romans had sway.

The trumpets are loud and solemn calls of God by which men are summoned to hear the sharp warnings of His judgment.

The sounding of the trumpets are the distinct answer to what we have in verses 3-6.

The angel that stands at the altar with the golden censer is surely no other than the Lord Jesus, not openly manifested as in Chap. 19, but seen in angelic form as the great Mediator between God and man. It cannot refer to a created angel, for no angel is spoken of as a priest, neither does an angel have to do with

the prayers of the saints, but the Lord Himself does. The prayers of saints are ascending from the earth, and are being offered upon the golden altar, not the prayers of any favoured individual, but the prayers of all saints.

Here there is much incense offered up with the prayers. The incense is not prayers for it is offered with the prayers. Incense represents the merits of Christ, by which the prayers of saints can alone be acceptable to God. It speaks of all the fragrance of Christ's Person and work, and it is this which gives efficacy to the prayers of His people.

We of our day who know and prove the efficacy of Christ's intercession so often express it in the words of the well known hymn.

"To all our prayers and praises, Christ adds His sweet perfume,
And love the censer raises these odours to consume".

But there is a striking difference between our prayers and the prayers offered here.

Our prayers do not call for judgment upon our enemies but rather forgiveness.

There are the supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks to be made for all men, to God the Saviour, who will have all men to be saved (read 1 Tim. 2 :1-6). Here however in Rev. 8, we find a very different answer to a very different prayer.

Here we have the remnant who are set forth so clearly in the Psalms, and who are entirely upon Jewish ground, suffering through the oppression of men, but who are found calling upon God to take vengeance upon their enemies. In answer to their prayers the angel takes the censer, and filling it with fire from the altar, casts it into the earth.

There were two altars in the temple, the golden altar of incense within the veil, also the brazen altar of burnt offerings in the court.

This altar formed the first meeting place of the sinner with God, and it was upon this that all the burnt sacrifices were offered.

The golden altar is spoken of as being before the throne, or before God.

The censer is usually a symbol of grace used in connection with the sacrifice, but here the censer is not used to offer incense, neither have we fire consuming the sacrifice, but the filling of the censer with fire from off the altar with which to consume the enemies of God's people.

The casting of the fire upon the earth brings forth voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake, symbols of various forms of divine power in judgment upon the earth.

He who made priestly intercession for His people now becomes the pourer out of judgment.

He who is the Saviour of His people now becomes the Judge of their enemies.

The merits of Christ which had been denied by an apostate world, becomes the reason for the pouring out of God's wrath upon the guilty.

The angel is not presented as an Advocate with the Father, the character by which He is known to the Christian of today, but as calling down God's judgment upon those who oppress the people of God.

For those under the altar that we read of in Rev. 6 :9, there was no intercession.

They had been rejected and slain like Christ Himself. Now, while they cry for vengeance, yet they are beyond the further reach of their enemies.

Here however, the saints are on earth, and full of distress, and the trumpets are God's answer to their prayers which are presented to Him with the incense, by the angel mediator.

With the casting of the fire into the earth there are voices heard which may represent God directing these judgments.

The thunderings and lightnings followed by the earthquake all speak of the solemn majesty and holiness of God that will no longer tolerate evil. They follow the specific judgments of the trumpets. "The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up" v.7.

Hail is often used as expressive of violent and destructive judgment, but here it is mingled with blood and fire which shows that God's hand of holiness is in the judgment. Blood is indicative of death, resulting from God's hand in judgment.

"The third part of the earth", which is said to be included in the verse according to the best manuscripts, and so given in J.N.D.'s New Trans., marks the sphere of the judgment. From Rev. 12:4, we may gather that the third part has reference to the Roman earth or empire: this judgment is especially directed upon this empire, the chief seat of the Dragon's rule. The third part of trees being burnt up would refer to the fact that many of the great ones of the earth will be consumed. The green grass would denote general prosperity, but here marked out for general destruction.

In Chap. 7, we found the judgment withheld from the trees (v.3) until the servants of God were sealed, but there is no sparing them now.

Again, in answer to the prayers of the saints, there is a further intervention of God on their behalf when the second angel sounds.

Here, a great mountain burning with fire, is cast into the sea, and a third part becomes blood.

The burning mountain represents a great power under the judgment of God, but which is destined to be an occasion of judgment to others.

We have a guide to its meaning in Jer. 51:25, "Behold I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and I will make thee a burnt mountain". Jeremiah clearly refers to Babylon the destroyer, but who would itself be destroyed.

In Rev. it probably has reference to the revived Roman Empire.

Every nation which has close contact with that apostate power must suffer the terrible judgments of God.

This great satanic power comes under God's judgment, yet is used of God as His rod to inflict suffering upon others.

Here the judgment falls, not so much on the prophetic earth but outside of it, upon the sea, the masses of people found in an unsettled state.

Dying here is thought by some to have reference to moral death, to departure from all profession of, and association with God.

The reference to shipping evidently points to the ruin of this means of commerce and prosperity.

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters: And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter" v's. 10, 11.

In the burning mountain we doubtless had a figure of the Roman power, in seeking to destroy all who would not submit to its authority, but in v.10, we probably have set before us the second beast, the false prophet, the king of the Jews, who as a Jew, should have maintained the truth as to the One True God, but who had turned from God, and who not only receives his power from the first beast, but who ever seeks to support his claims over the earth. The burning lamp indicates an apostate. The lamp is a well known symbol of profession.

Here we have a person of high rank, but who is still subordinate to a higher person or power.

His fall, here morally, brings about moral chaos.

Wormwood speaks of poison and corrupting apostasy, and God's judgment falls upon the apostate part of the nation. If this be so we can well understand the meaning of his name, Wormwood, and the defiling of every source of blessing upon the earth.

That which especially marks the second beast is his power of deception.

He is essentially a deceiver, and the special sphere of his deception lies in the land of Palestine.

The waters here are not of the sea as in reference to the previous trumpet, but of rivers and fountains. Here we have not only a corrupting of the principles of the people, but a corrupting of every source of their lives. It is the imbibing of the worship of the Antichrist which is so fatal to the people.

With the sounding of the 4th trumpet, the third part of the sun was smitten, and a third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars, so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise, v.12. Here we have a blow which is extended to that which is general, but still in its limited sphere.

Five times we have the third part referred to, showing it is limited to the sphere over which Rome ruled. The sun speaks of that which is supreme, here probably referring to the Roman Emperor; the moon a subordinate power, probably referring to the second beast in his relationship with Israel as their acknowledged king, while the stars would refer to lesser powers.

Here we find all the governments of the Roman earth being smitten, no part being spared.

Day and night are also affected.

Darkness and confusion marks the public course of things, also in the private home life where rest should have been their portion.

All semblance of power in the empire crashes, and the whole scene becomes like an awful nightmare.

“And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound” v.13.

The word angel should here read eagle.

The presence of the eagle is very significant. It was a sinister omen of coming judgment which was about to overtake the earth dwellers, or inhabitants of the earth.

This is a marked class of people who have sought to shut God out in every possible way, and who seek to claim the earth for themselves.

If the first four trumpets have been severe in the the judgments they have announced, the last three are even more severe, so much so, that God pronounces these solemn words in reference to them, woe, woe, woe.

CHAPTER IX

Verse 13 of our previous chapter belongs to, and is introductory to Chap. 9.

It is thought that the first four trumpets are more confined to the western part of the empire, whereas the next two have more reference to the eastern part. The woe trumpets are of a different character from those referred to in the previous chapter.

John sees a star which had fallen from heaven to the earth.

This one, who should have been, by the position he occupied, an instrument of light and governmental order upon the earth, has now fallen from his original place. Here he becomes Satan's instrument for the infliction of torment upon those who have given up their God for the lie of Satan.

Doubtless it is the Antichrist, the king of the Jews, who is energised by Satan to support his religious pretensions.

The key of the bottomless pit is given him although it does not say by whom.

This is the place where evil is bound, or confined under restraint, and must not be confounded with the lake of fire, where evil is finally dealt with, and punished eternally.

The bottomless pit is the place referred to in the gospels, which demons shunned to enter (see Luke 8:31), also it is the place where Satan is bound during the thousand years reign of Christ.

The first four trumpet judgments are providential, although inflicted by God, but now, these that follow, while still under God's control, are diabolical in their origin and nature.

“And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit”. v.2.

Power to loose the full darkening influence of Satan is given him.

The smoke has more a moral character, and refers to the darkening and poisonous influence of Satan upon the minds of men.

As smoke blinds the vision, and a great furnace speaks of intense burning so the minds of men are blinded and their consciences are seared.

The sun, speaking of supreme authority, and all heavenly light which would denote a healthy influence of order is made to cease by the evil satanic influences which overshadows everything.

The air is the realm over which Satan has sway (see Eph. 2:2). By the smoke which comes from the pit, the minds of men are blinded so that they cannot see light in God's light. "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power" v.3.

They are the direct instruments of Satan's power, and as the locusts are noted for their literal power of devastation, so with these locusts in reference to their moral devastation over the minds of men. Here it is moral rather than literal as is proved by verse 4.

"And it was commanded that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" v.4.

Locusts here are clearly symbolical, for literal locusts do not attack men, whereas these locusts actually attack apostate Israelites.

The use of locusts is made use of in the book of Joel. There we find the literal plague of locusts with which the land had been visited, is used as a figure of a moral and greater invasion, and so here.

The grass and herbage would be the natural food of literal locusts, whereas here they are commanded not to hurt them, but only those men which had not the seal of God upon their foreheads.

Those sealed in Rev. 7, were the elect of the tribes of Israel. Those not sealed would be the apostate part of the nation dwelling in Jerusalem and Palestine, hence it seems to be distinctly Jewish in its sphere.

Many have thought that this judgment had reference to the inroads of the armies of the Saracens of the 7th and 8th centuries, but here in Rev. 9, the locusts had no power to kill, but only to torment, and that only for a limited time, whereas the slaughter of men was a feature which marked the march and conquests of the Mahomedans. In our chapter men seek death but cannot find it. Death is to be preferred to the torment which is inflicted upon them by Satan.

Thus while the invasions of the Saracens may present some features resembling what is here referred to, the strict application of our chapter can only refer to a day yet future.

Doubtless too the affliction here referred to has reference to the soul and mind rather than the body.

"And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the face of men. And they had their hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions" (verses 7, 8). They were a military imperial power, claiming the righteous sanction of the Godhead for their aggression even as evil dictators of our present day claim that God destined them to be the rulers of the world.

There was great masculine energy marking them outwardly, but seen from God's standpoint, they were subject and weak.

How graphic is the picture of man's progress even in the present day.

There may be great warlike powers of aggression and their very progress may give some the impression that they have God with them, but in reality they are the dupes of Satan and subject to his power.

They had breastplates of iron and teeth like the teeth of lions.

As another has said, they had steeled hearts and consciences.

It was impossible to reach their hearts for they were hardened against every emotion of pity, and were relentless in their cruelty.

They were ferocious; also rapidity of action would be denoted by their wings which were as the sound of many chariots of horses running to battle. But their greatest curse was probably in their tails with their stings.

There was the sting of false doctrine following their evil course.

Their power was to hurt men five months. Five months was the usual period of the life of the locust. There is no alleviation to the sufferings of men; they are tormented the whole of the time these locusts have power to hurt.

This may be the fulfilling of 2 Thess. 2:11, 12, in reference to the strong delusions God sends them, that they should believe a lie and be damned. Locusts have no king over them we are plainly told in Proverbs 30:27, but these locusts have a king. "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon" v.11.

This king may refer to the fallen star of v.1, the one to whom the key of the bottomless pit was given. Whether it be in his Hebrew or Greek name, the thought of him as the destroyer is clearly expressed.

Abaddon means destruction, while Apollyon means destroyer.

The name may belong to Satan personally or to the chief of his angels, but it is he who governs this destructive army through a man or men, and the vengeance falls upon those who bear the name of the people of God, but who had become apostates. First they are deceived by this false king, then, when he has them completely in his power he torments them with fiendish delight.

The fact of the name being given both in Hebrew and Greek may show that these two woes are respectively against apostate Jews, also apostate Christendom.

Satan himself is spoken of elsewhere as being the god and prince of this world. He is the god of the world religiously, usurping the place of worship which only belongs to God. He is also the prince of this world politically, causing wars and rumours of wars, showing how the world lies in the wicked one.

He is also the prince of the power of the air.

In hell, as another has truly said, he will himself be tormented and doubtless will be the most miserable object there.

He will in no wise rule there as a king; there is no scripture certainly to support such a thought.

In the day that is coming, when Christ will be upon the throne, we find the key of the bottomless pit in the hands of an angel, and that he has a chain with which he binds Satan and casts him into the bottomless pit for the whole of the thousand years.

After this he will be loosed from his prison and gather a vast host to war against the saints at Jerusalem, after which he is again taken, and cast into the lake of fire. This is his final doom, and the scriptures affirm that he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. In the sounding of the 6th trumpet, we are translated to an entirely different scene.

The woe connected with the 5th trumpet being past, we are told that there are two woes to follow.

“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God” v.13.

This verse, and Ch. 8, v.3, contain the only two references to the golden altar in the book of Revelation.

The golden altar was connected with the prayers of God's people.

The four horns express the full strength of the altar, an horn being an emblem of power.

Here we find the whole strength of the altar opposed to those who are the subjects of the following woe, and that in answer to the prayers of the saints as in Chap. 8 :4. All that God is, is for the saints, but here we find that the whole of that power is opposed to their enemies. The voice that is heard is doubtless God's voice.

Here the command is to loose the four angels which were bound in the great river Euphrates.

“And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour (or as it should read, the hour) and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men”.

This is a judgment which takes its rise in the east, but which falls upon the Roman Empire within it. They are prepared by God to carry out His judgments in the exact hour appointed by God, the hour here referring not so much to the time of duration, but that of its commencement.

The four angels are clearly evil spirits, which it seems to me, would control and dominate a unity of four great powers merged into one vast power. Up to this moment they have been restrained by God's power, but now they are to be released, not to torment, as in the last woe, but to slay with a terrible slaughter. The river Euphrates was the eastern limit of the land as promised to Abraham.

It was also the eastern boundary of the old Roman Empire. With the loosing of these angels a vast army is revealed comprising some 200 millions of men. It is a huge army that expresses the great power of men, and it appears to me that this great host can only have its counterpart in the great Assyrian power of that day which will over-run the land of Palestine and cause great loss of life to the great Roman power which will be found supporting the Antichrist then ruling as

Israel's king. It is only from such countries as Russia, Germany etc., that such vast numbers can be raised. The inroads of the Turks into the eastern part of the Roman Empire in the 15th century may be a foreshadowing of what we have here, but doubtless its strict application is still future.

Doubtless Turkey will again figure in this north eastern confederacy, linked with Russia and Germany, and many smaller countries whose cause they will profess to espouse, but who will merely be exploited by the great powers to their own aggressive ends. It will be a combination of northern and eastern armies to attack the revived Roman power in the vicinity of Palestine and the Suez.

Isaiah shows that the Jewish king will make a covenant with the Roman power to avoid invasion by the north eastern powers, but we are shown that it will be of no avail.

This covenant will be of Satanic origin and not of God. The object of this vast invading power will be the extermination of the Jews, and the capture of the land of Palestine.

As to the great conflicts between these rival powers, these are vividly set forth by Daniel and others.

Many of the great conflicts which have already taken place are but a partial fulfilment of what will yet take place on a larger scale.

Both these powers are bitterly opposed to each other, they are also both opposed to all that is of God.

The one is godless all through, the spirit of which is most marked in lands like Russia even in our present day. The other power will tolerate for a time, and even allow themselves to be led by the religious power of Rome in order to secure unity and power.

Then, when its end will have been reached, the Roman Emperor will seek divine honours for himself, and demand the homage and worship of all as did Nebuchadnezzar of old.

This will be furthered by the Antichrist in Palestine who will set up the image of the first beast, and demand the worship of it by all of the Jewish nation.

All who refuse to bow will be persecuted, and many will be slain.

We have a picture of it in the three Hebrew worthies, who, when they refused to bow to the image, were taken and cast into the burning fiery furnace. God showed His power in deliverance, and doubtless that same power will be exercised in the coming day, and preserve many who put their trust in Him, for "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9).

Isaiah speaks of this great invasion, and of the desolator who will sweep through the land like a flood.

There is wholesale slaughter connected with this second woe, but there is also the element of false doctrine even as there was in the first woe, although it is of a different character.

There was power in the mouth of these horses, and also in their tails which were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt (see v.19). Following their conquests they seek to disseminate their false evil doctrines by which the hearts of men are removed still further from God.

Many who do not perish in the great slaughter which takes place will come under the dark delusions by which their false doctrines are spread.

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk", v.20. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts, v.21. With hearts hardened, and consciences seared beyond feeling, they see the slaughter around them, and experience the terrible judgments of God, both on men's circumstances and also on men themselves, but there is no repentance on their part. They continue in their idolatry, their course also being marked by violence and corruption. There are sorceries and witchcraft, such as fortune telling and the black arts, also fornication, physical immorality and unbridled lust. There are thefts also, there is no respect for property rights, neither is life held sacred; murders become common on account of unbridled passion and lust.

It is truly a dark picture, and shows the depravity into which men will sink when God is shut out of their lives.

The light becomes darkness, and how great is that darkness.

CHAPTER X

Previous to this chapter six of the trumpets have been sounded. Now we have an interval before the actual sounding of the seventh. Chapter 10, also 11:1-14 really forms a parenthesis.

We have a similar period between the 6th and 7th seals, although with slight differences.

There we noticed that in the midst of judgment God remembers mercy, A perfect number from the twelve tribes of Israel, also a countless number of Gentiles are marked out for deliverance from the great tribulation which was so soon to come upon the whole world.

In Chap. 16, verses 13-16, we have a further parenthesis between the pouring out of the sixth and seventh vials. From 11:14, we may learn that the parenthesis there is connected with, and supplementary to the 6th trumpet, for there we are told, the second woe is past, and behold, the third cometh quickly.

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire".

In many details this personal description of the mighty angel points to the Lord Jesus, even as He had been set forth by the angel priest at the golden altar in 8:3. This is not as yet the open manifestation of Him as King of kings as in Chap. 19, but here He is seen in angelic form, yet seen in power preparing the way to the setting up of the kingdom.

The cloud is a well known, and recognised symbol of the divine presence, both in the old and new testaments.

When Israel was led out of Egypt the angel of the covenant went before them; there was the cloud to guide them by day, and the pillar of fire by night. We have both the cloud and the fire in our verse (see also Rev. 1:15). Again on the mount of transfiguration we have the cloud marking the divine presence, also His countenance seen as the sun.

Again in Rev. 4:3, where the Lord is seen on the throne we find a rainbow round about the throne.

I think then, there can be little doubt as to Who is set forth here.

Presented in angelic form gives the thought of distance, the state of God's people being such that God does not openly manifest Himself as their God.

Nevertheless God remains faithful, and never forsakes His people. This is set forth by the rainbow which speaks of God's faithful covenant of mercy with creation.

The sun speaks of supreme power; His feet being as pillars of fire speaks of firmness in judgment.

"And he had in his hand a little book open; and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth" v.2. The open book here is in striking contrast to the sealed book of Rev. 5.

Here the contents of the book were perfectly revealed, and open for all to read.

It was a little book because it was soon to be fulfilled and would not be extended as in Old Testament times. The thought of setting His right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, would suggest that He is about to claim possession of everything under heaven. The sea would speak of the nations which He was so soon to vex in His displeasure, while the earth would doubtless refer to the prophetic earth, the land of Palestine. "And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices" v.3.

God's majesty is manifested in the judgment He executeth. Hosea could say, "When He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west" Hosea 11:10.

Again verses 3, 4 and 8 speak of the Lord God as having spoken in all His majesty, and likens Him to a lion roaring. In Rev. 5, He was presented as the Lamb, but here it is more in the character of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The seven thunders uttering their voices refer to the making known of God's rights, but the manner in which this is made known is not revealed.

Seven sets forth complete perfection, here seen in the intervention by God in judgment in answer to the lion like cry.

There is no revealing at present of what was uttered, although it is made known later.

Then in the next three verses we have the significance of the action described in v.2.

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven; and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, Who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer".

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished as he hath declared to his servants the prophets". v. 5 to 7.

There is thus the oath in confirmation of the word, the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie.

The angel swears by God Himself, the Creator of the heavens, the earth, and the sea, with all that are in them, that there should be no more delay, for this is really the force of the passage.

The day of God's salvation for this world will have drawn to a close, and the asserting of the Lord's claims would be made good.

"Time no longer" may suggest that eternity will then begin, but this does not, and cannot, refer to any such thing.

There will not only be the making good of the Lord's claims upon the earth, but there will be the thousand years reign of Christ before eternity begins. When the seventh angel shall begin to sound the mystery of God should be finished as He had declared to His servants the prophets.

The mystery of God here refers to the way God had allowed evil to go on in the way it had.

Evil so often appears to prosper, and good to be trodden under foot.

Where is God to allow all this suffering is the constant cry of men, especially in our present day of war and distress.

Men forget, or do not wish to remember, that He who came to make peace by the blood of His cross, has been despised and rejected.

With His rejection there can be no peace but a sword. By their fatal choice of a murderer, and rejection of the Deliverer, the world has become more and more under the power of Satan, and God allows men to feel the full effect of sin and rebellion against Himself. But the day will come when God will deal with the power of evil.

His word, which He has magnified above His Name will be fulfilled to the very letter.

Even in Matt. 13, where we have the kingdom of heaven presented in such detail, there were mysteries connected with it which the disciples failed to understand. If the Lord was establishing His kingdom upon the earth should He allow evil to have such a place in it and why should He tolerate it for so long a period? We are shown that while the King is away, the children of the kingdom are seen to be in suffering, and this goes on until the time the King returns to receive His Kingdom.

Then there will be the gathering out of that kingdom all that offends.

Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father.

This suffering time for the righteous will continue even after the church has been taken to glory, but the righteous of that day will not be christians.

But to return to our chapter, we next find that John is commanded by the voice from heaven to take the open book from the hand of the angel, and told to eat it, and that it would be as honey to his taste, but that there would be bitterness within.

Moreover the contents of this open book was to be in his mouth for a testimony to peoples, nations, tongues and kings.

What lessons are here taught for the servant of God. If he would be used of God in testimony to others he must needs be found feeding upon God's word for himself. How sweet are God's revelations to his soul, yet as he dwells upon the evil of men, and of the terrible judgments which are so soon to overtake this guilty world, how his heart aches for the poor fallen sons of men.

If the Saviour could weep over the guilty city of Jerusalem, can we not weep over the guilty world, and this surely should stir us up to greater efforts to reach them. Now we have revelations to make known which speak of God's great love and long suffering.

If we know the terror of the Lord we should seek to persuade men to flee from the wrath to come, pointing out the only safe refuge to which the sinner can flee, even the cross of our Lord Jesus, upon which full atonement for sin has been made.

CHAPTER XI

In this chapter we are brought into the very centre of prophetic subjects. We have the temple, the altar, worshippers, and the city of Jerusalem. We have a remnant owned and recognised of God as worshippers, while the mass of the nation are seen to be corrupt, and going on with that which is false.

We have also the Gentiles and nations brought in as being opposed to God, and all that is of God.

The reed, or measuring rod, with which the temple, altar and worshippers were to be measured gives the thought that these were owned of God while everything outside of them was rejected.

It is clearly evident that there will be a temple built by the Jews, and that God will own and recognise the worship of those who come to Him by the brazen altar.

This altar was the altar of burnt offerings, and marked the acceptance by God of those persons who brought their offering to it.

We know from the scriptures that the Roman power will make a covenant with the Jews to respect the religion of their fathers, but that in the midst of the week that agreement will be ruthlessly broken, and the Roman power will seek to deify itself, and claim the worship of all even as did Nebuchadnezzar of old.

There is only one city upon the earth spoken of as the holy city, and that is Jerusalem, the city in which God had chosen to place His Name.

The court was not to be measured because it was in the hands of the Gentiles, who would tread it under foot for 42 months, or 3½ years.

This period clearly has reference to the latter half of the week, the time of great tribulation, when the believing Jewish remnant will pass through a time of unparalleled suffering. We know from Daniel that there is still one week to be fulfilled.

The 69 weeks of years terminated with the death of the Messiah, leaving one week still to be fulfilled.

Prophecy has to do with the earth, and with God's earthly people the Jews, and is excluded in the present day of grace, when God is calling out a people for heaven.

Neither must we confound this with the times of the Gentiles referred to by the Lord Jesus in Luke 21.24.

This period commenced when Nebuchadnezzar took the city of Jerusalem about 606 B.C., and continues to the time when the Lord's feet stand upon the mount of Olives according to Zech. 14, 4-9.

After the Church has been taken to heaven, God will again resume His dealings on earth in reference to His earthly people Israel.

With the taking away of the power that hinders the development of evil, the Holy Ghost in the church, there will be the revealing of the man of sin.

There will be the reviving of the Roman empire, and its great leader will make a covenant with the Jewish nation to respect their worship of Jehovah as we have already said, establishing also a Jew upon the throne to rule over them, a man who comes in his own name, and who is received by the mass of the Jewish nation as their Messiah.

As already stated, divine honours and allegiance will be claimed by the Roman Emperor, these claims being supported and furthered by the Anti-Christ in Palestine by the setting up of the great image of the beast, and by the lying wonders by which he seeks to deceive the people.

This is the abomination of desolation referred to elsewhere, the strong delusions, by which they should believe a lie that they might be damned because they had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But for 3½ years there will be a powerful testimony rendered by God's witnesses, doubtless during the first half of the week.

These witnesses are prophets in affliction and reproach, but withal they witness with much power.

There has been much surmising as to who they really are, some affirming that it is actually Moses and Elias risen from the dead, because of the character of their miracles, but if they come in the spirit of these prophets, they need not be actually these very men.

Doubtless they have reference to the godly remnant of that day, who will bear an adequate testimony to the claims of the God of the earth.

Under the law at least two witnesses were required, but this was sufficient in God's sight.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.

These witnesses prophecy their full number of days, and none can stop their testimony until God's appointed time, even as the Lord Jesus in His days upon the earth, could not be taken until His hour had come.

The very fact of them being clothed in sack cloth showed how much these witnesses identified themselves with Israel's sin.

We are told in V.4, that "These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." Here we have a clear reference to Zech, 4; 2, 3.

They are God's anointed ones as set forth by the olive trees, for they testify in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Also their testimony is God's light in the midst of the darkness that prevails at that time.

It is not the establishment of royalty and priesthood as Zechariah shows will be established under the reign of Christ, but still they testify to God's claims upon the earth. Their word is also with power.

Like Elijah of old, they have power to consume with fire those who would seek to hurt them (see 2 Kings, 1).

This is in marked contrast to the Lord Jesus when He was here in lowly grace.

The disciples could say when they saw how the Samaritans rejected Him, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?"

How the Lord could rebuke them and say, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9; 55, 56.

Again the witnesses of Rev. II have power to shut heaven that it rain not even as did Elijah of old, also to turn the waters into blood, as did Moses in Egypt.

God was with them in such manifest power that they are able to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will. Verse 7, shows that there will come a time when their testimony will be finished, and, like John the Baptist, they will meet with a violent end.

"The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." V.7.

We are told in Chap. 13, that this beast rises up out of the sea, out of the unsettled masses of people, but here we are shown that his origin is Satanic.

Doubtless this war and slaughter will mark the beginning of the latter part of the week.

Evidences of this slaughter will evidently mark Jerusalem for the whole of this period, that is, the last half of the week.

"Their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

The latter clause proves that it has reference to Jerusalem.

It is likened to Sodom because of the filthy corruption which will mark the city at that time, and Egypt because of the oppression of God's people, but there is only one city in which the Lord Jesus has been crucified, and that is Jerusalem.

"And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves."

I have thought that the 3½ days may refer to the latter half of the week.

These four classes mentioned perpetuate their guilt by refusing even a burial of the dead bodies; they would doubtless seek that these dead bodies should serve as a warning to others.

In V.10, we have another class marked out as rejoicing over them, because these two prophets had tormented them that dwell on the earth.

Here there is a distinct reference to the earth dwellers, a class of people who would claim the earth for themselves to the exclusion of all that was of God.

They are a marked class of people in the book of Revelation.

But at the close of this period of 3½ days, God intervenes in the raising up of those who had been slain.

This immediately precedes the coming of Christ in power.

Thus the impious rejoicing of these earthdwellers is turned to fear as they hear God's summons calling these witnesses to heaven, and also behold them taken to heaven in the cloud.

It was not merely a cloud, for here it was the evidence of God's presence and intervention.

"And the same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven", v.13.

How solemnly God intervenes in the vindication of His servants marking out 7,000 names of men as coming under His special judgment.

If 7,000 were reserved by God in the days of Elijah as being faithful, here we have a like number marked out for judgment as unfaithful.

The remnant spoken of here are not the godly remnant referred to elsewhere, but simply the rest or remainder, those who had not been slain by the earthquake. They give glory to the God of heaven, but there is no evidence that they acknowledge His claims upon the earth.

This ends the second woe; the third, in which we have the overthrow of the Roman Empire and the Antichrist, was to follow quickly.

With the sounding of the seventh trumpet there were voices in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever", v.15.

It is heaven's announcement that the world kingdom has become the kingdom of the Lord and His Christ, and that He will reign throughout the ages.

We have doubtless a reference to Psalm 2, as to the Lord and His Christ, and to the setting up of His kingdom in power.

Chap. 10, v.7, has already given us the key to the import of the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

There we read how the mystery of God would be finished. This brings us to the close of the last week, although it also looks on to the time when evil will be finally dealt with. Then we have the effect of this announcement.

"The four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned," v's. 16, 17.

Mark here the position of the elders, that they are still seated upon their thrones in heaven; it is characteristic of their position.

They worship God as revealed in the Old Testament, Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, because it had reference to God's kingdom upon earth.

"Because thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned".

The expression "which art, and wast, and art to come" generally expresses the eternal existence of God, but in this verse the latter part "and art to come" should be omitted.

When it is a question of the earthly kingdom being established the future is, as it were, merged in the present. Then in v.18, we have a striking contrast to v.17.

That which causes the greatest joy in heaven produces the greatest distress upon earth.

It is for this reason that it is referred to as the third woe. "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth", v.18. There are three things spoken of in this verse; (1) the anger of the nations; (2) the judgment of the dead; (3) the reward of the faithful. There is the judgment of living nations, also of the dead. The living nations who oppose the claims of Christ will be dealt with in unsparing judgment, but with the dealing with evil we are also carried on to the judgment of

the dead at the great white throne, where both small and great are made to stand before God.

But if God thus rewards judgment to the wicked, He also gives rewards to those who have feared Him.

There are three classes referred to; (1) His servants the prophets; (2) His saints; (3) those who fear His name, both small and great.

There are those who have testified as prophets for God, witnesses of every dispensation, including the sealed ones of Ch. 7:3, also prophets of v.10.

There will be many who have openly stood for the truth. But there are the saints in general, both those who have lived before, and since the cross.

Then there are those who have feared Him.

These may refer especially to those of a future day, to the many who fear God, like the seven thousand of Elijah's day, disciples in secret, but who have not bowed the knee to what is false.

God knows perfectly how to reward each and all according to the way they have lived for God and served Him. Needless perhaps to say, we have no special reference to Christians, only in a general way. They receive their portion with Christ before any of the judgments fall upon the world, but with the godly Jew of a future day, or those from the Gentiles who fear God, their blessing and deliverance will only come through judgment upon their enemies. V.19 is connected with what follows, and not what precedes it.

Having been carried on to the end, we are then brought back to review things which will take place prior to this great deliverance.

CHAPTER XII

As already stated, the last verse of Chap. 11, has really to do with this chapter, and not with what precedes it. This verse, with the 12th, 13th and 14th chapters form a connected whole.

The temple and the ark of the covenant show that we are upon Jewish ground, and that in the midst of judgment God proves Himself to be a covenant keeping God. We are brought back to trace with further and greater detail the development of evil in connection with God's earthly people Israel, upon the earth. With the opening of the temple in heaven we find God taking up the cause of His earthly people Israel upon earth, hence we have lightnings, voices, thunderings, and earthquake and great hail. These things are all in reference to earth and earthly judgments, and are not seen at the great white throne after the heavens and earth have passed away. In our chapter we are taken up to heaven to be shown God's divine view of all the evil principles which would be at work.

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, v.1. Here Israel is distinctly in view.

She is clothed with supreme authority as set forth by the sun.

The Lord Jesus will be truly the Sun of Righteousness, but here we have that glory invested in Israel.

The moon was under her feet.

The moon derives all its glory from the greater glory of the sun, and this is true of Israel in a special way.

As another has said, She is invested with the glory of perfect administration in man, and all the original glory of this under the whole covenant, under her feet.

The stars have clear reference to the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Lord Jesus could say, "Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matt. : 19, 28.

We are also reminded of Joseph's dream in reference to the sun, moon and stars, which are there shown to have reference to his parents and brethren.

"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered," v.2.

How wonderfully God had preserved the woman for this moment.

Many times had Satan sought to blot out the royal line, and thus frustrate the purposes of God in reference to Christ.

We know how again he sought, through Herod, to destroy the Lord Jesus at His birth, but we are here shown heaven's view of the vain and futile efforts of Satan.

In reference to the travailing of the woman, we are not to take this as a literal reference to Christ's birth into this world, but rather in connection with God's purposes respecting Israel.

Sorrow and pain in connection with childbirth is the result of sin, but there was no taint of sin in reference to the birth of Christ.

He was born holy, and not as others who were born in sin and shapen in iniquity.

Micah 5, compared with Rev. 12, gives light upon this subject.

"Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek."

In Micah we have reference to His rejection which is omitted in Rev. 12.

Again we are there told, "Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth."

Here the birth of Christ is connected with the accomplishment of God's purposes respecting Israel.

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads," v.3.

It is remarkable how clearly this answers to the description of the beast of Rev. 13: 1.

Verse 9, of our chapter clearly shows that the dragon is Satan himself.

We see clearly that Satan is one with the beast of 13:1, and that he is the controlling power of the beast.

As God will rule the universe in and through His Beloved Son, so Satan will seek to rule in and through the man of sin.

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth," v.4.

There were many angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God, and these angels have liberty still to work evil among the sons of men.

There are fallen angels alluded to both by Peter and Jude who are bound in chains under darkness awaiting the judgment of the last day, but this has reference to the angels who left their first estate as recorded in Gen. 6.

Angels who follow Satan are not yet bound, but have liberty to do evil, although controlled by God.

Doubtless as evil spirits came to the earth with their corruptions in Gen. 6, so again will it be when Satan fills the earth with evil spirits, who again will corrupt the whole earth.

For Satan and his angels the lake of fire has been prepared, but they are not there yet.

It is a remarkable fact that scripture reveals that the two beasts of Rev. 13, will be the first to be cast into the lake of fire, and that at least a thousand years before Satan and his angels are finally cast there also.

They will be confined in the bottomless pit during the thousand years, but after this they will be released for a short time before receiving their final doom.

God not only makes the wrath of man to praise Him but also that of demons.

"And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born," v.4.

If he failed to hinder that birth taking place, he would seek to destroy that child as soon as it was born.

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne," v.5.

All is viewed in reference to Israel; we have no reference to Calvary, but simply His birth and translation.

We have a similar thing in Romans 9: 4, 5.

"Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

Here the ultimate triumphs of the Lord Jesus are set forth. He is to rule with a rod of iron, but before that moment comes He is caught up to heaven.

We have again a similar thought in Gen. 3 : 15.

“It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. The ultimate victory of Christ is first and prominent, but it could only be by the way of the cross.

He must first suffer before He could enter into His glory. “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred and three score days”, v.6.

As already expressed, the woman can here have no reference to the Church of God.

The church is the bride, and not the mother of Christ.

The church also, having been brought to the Lord in time, is caught up to be with the Lord, and to be at rest with Him. While Israel is being so cruelly persecuted, as she will be by the great red dragon who is spoken of in this way because of his great and bloody persecution of the saints of God, she is seen on earth, and is given a place of refuge in the wilderness and not in heaven, which will be the resting place for the church of God.

There the woman, as figurative of an earthly people, is kept, and provided for by God Himself, although it will doubtless be through human channels.

He who could use an Obadiah in the very house of Ahab, to hide, and feed the prophets of the Lord in the caves, will again exercise His power in providing for the needs of His people.

The 1,260 days spoken of here are but a few days short of the 3½ years, the few intervening days doubtless being taken up during the flight to the wilderness of the godly Jew. The very days of their persecution are numbered by God, and no power on earth or in heaven can extend them beyond God's limit.

In Matt. 24 :22, we are told that “Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elects' sake those days shall be shortened”.

Then in v.7 of our chapter we have another startling fact brought before us, and that is, war in heaven.

This may be a surprising thought to some who only associate heaven with rest and happiness, and for the departed saint of God it is so, for to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, in whose presence there is fulness of joy.

But as to the heavens themselves, the scriptures show that they are unclean in God's sight because Satan and his angels still have access to the heavenlies.

Eph. 6, shows that the spiritual conflict of the believer is in the heavenlies.

Job shows that when the angels presented themselves before God, Satan also came with them as the accuser of Job. Here in Rev. 12, we are shown that this war in heaven marks God's intervention on behalf of His people Israel. Michael, in Jude's epistle, is said to be the archangel, that is, the chief of the angels.

In Dan. 10, Michael is seen as supporting the claims of God's earthly people, while Dan. 12 :1, distinctly refers to Michael as the great prince which standeth for the children of Daniel's people, and that especially in the time of the great trial of affliction predicted as being the future portion of God's people.

Michael has countless numbers of angels under his command. The Lord Jesus could say in Matt. 26 :53, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels”. But Satan also has his hosts of evil spirits who follow him. In Jude we read how Michael durst not bring a railing accusation against Satan, but says, “The Lord rebuke thee”, but here in Rev. 12, we read how Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, also how the dragon and his angels fought.

It is the last and greatest effort on the part of Satan to retain his place in heaven, but for him it is a hopeless fight, for the scripture assures us that he prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

We read about the great dragon in the 11th chapter, but here we are told distinctly that it is Satan himself.

He is also the old serpent, or as J.N.D. renders it, the ancient serpent.

This verse, with 2 Cor. 11 :3, makes it quite clear that the serpent refers to Satan himself, in the cunning craftiness by which he seeks to deceive.

He is also spoken of as the Devil, the adversary. He is seen as an angel of light when seeking to deceive, also as a roaring lion when seeking whom he may devour. Here we are shown that he seeks to deceive the whole world. Now the time comes for him to be cast out of heaven and his angels with him.

When told by His disciples how the devils were subject to His name, the Lord Jesus could say, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven", Luke 10:18. The Lord Jesus looked on to the time of Rev. 12, when Satan would be cast down to the earth.

What a deliverance this will be for the heavens.

It is by reason of Satan and his angels having access to the heavenlies that they are spoken of as being unclean in His sight.

Hebrews 9:23, tells us it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these (the Jewish offerings), but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these".

Needless to say, this does not refer to the immediate dwelling place of God, for God dwells in a light which no creature can enter into; neither can sin have a place in His presence, for He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity (see Hab. 1:13). "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night".

There are three companies referred to in v's 10-17. There are the heavenly saints raised at the time of the rapture, and whose voice is now heard proclaiming God's intervention in power.

There are also the brethren who had overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and who loved not their lives unto the death.

Again there are the persecuted saints who will be preserved, and who are still upon the earth.

Here, with the first act of casting out Satan and his host, is the joyous celebration of salvation as having come to His people,

"When He makes bare His arm,
Who shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends,
Who then shall stay His hand?"

No longer is Satan allowed to have a place in heaven, there to accuse the brethren; this he had done in his anti-priestly character for a long time.

As already referred to, we read in Job how when the angels, or sons of God, presented themselves before God, Satan came with them.

We see how strongly he accused Job before God.

1 Kings 22 refers to a similar thing, also Zech. 3.

Thank God, if he now accuses the saints before God, we also know we have One who ever lives to make intercession for us.

Grievous things may be laid to our charge, but, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous", 1 John 2:1.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives into the death".

The blood of Christ had cleansed them before God and given them a good and purged conscience. But there was also their testimony before men; by both they were overcomers.

They were faithful for they loved not their souls unto the death.

It is not always preservation of life which marks victories. The Lord Jesus could say, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it", Luke 9:24.

So here in Revelation, there are those who are faithful even unto death, neither will they be losers thereby.

If they lose an earthly portion, they gain an heavenly one which is far greater.

"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time", v.12. The inhabitants of heaven may well rejoice in the knowledge that the powers of evil are being dealt with by God as evidenced by the casting out of Satan and his evil host.

On the other hand there is a woe pronounced upon the earth's dwellers.

The knowledge that Satan's time is limited, and very short, only causes him to redouble his efforts to destroy and bring misery to those that dwell upon the earth. It will truly be as men say, hell upon earth when Satan's power fills the earth without the restraining power which now hinders the development of evil.

In verses 13-17, Israel, or rather the godly remnant, is especially before us as persecuted by satanic power. Israel is seen as the one who has given birth to Christ.

No longer is Satan able to oppose Christ personally for He has already been taken to heaven from whence Satan has been cast out. Satan's efforts are now directed against Israel, as those who have been taken up by God.

"And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time (singular) and times (plural) and half a time, from the face of the serpent", v.14.

Eagle wings are suggestive of God's power in enabling His people to escape to the wilderness.

It was said of old how God bore His people on eagles wings. Just as the eagle spreads out its great wings to support its young when teaching them to fly, so in like manner God carried His people through the wilderness.

Here in Revelation we have a people preserved upon earth, with their place outside all human power and protection, and shut up to God alone in the wilderness.

There God nourishes them even as He did His people in their wilderness journey on to Canaan.

The serpent however does not cease in his efforts to destroy, but sends water out of his mouth like a flood after her, in the hope that she may be carried away by the flood.

The flood sets forth a mass of people (see Isa. 8 :7, 8). There we are shown that the overflowing waters refer to the king of Assyria with all his power and glory when he overran the land.

So again the great Assyrian power will over-run the land like a flood in their great effort to exterminate the Jews.

It is in view of this threatened invasion that the Jewish nation, under their false king, will make a covenant with the great Roman power to protect them from this invasion, but the scriptures assure us that it will not avail.

It will fail to stop the desolator laying waste to their land, but at the same time God will not allow the Jews to be exterminated. God in His providence will not allow this awful power to destroy Israel, using other civilized powers to withstand this invasion on the part of the enemy, and so render it futile. With the deadly conflicts of these nations God's people are, to some extent, left in peace so that they are not destroyed.

I think we have a picture of this same thing when Saul was seeking David with a view to destroy him.

David was in great danger of being captured or slain by Saul, when news reaches Saul of an invasion of his land by the enemy; immediately he leaves David, to enter into combat with the enemy.

The last verse of our chapter shows why the dragon was so full of wrath with the woman, and why he makes war with the remnant of her seed.

It is because they keep the commandments of their God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Here it is not a testimony rendered to Jesus Christ, but the testimony which He Himself has rendered and which they have received.

They are faithful in the keeping of God's commandments, and are preserved of God in spite of every effort on the part of the enemy against them.

Some, as those of V.11, lay down their life, but we have no word here of them suffering martyrdom, rather they are preserved of God as was Noah of old through the flood.

CHAPTER XIII

In this chapter we have brought before us the human instruments Satan uses in the fulfilling of all the evil designs of which he is the source.

We find the dragon imitating God, who had given all power and authority to the Son, with the Holy Ghost acting in divine power to exalt the Son.

So in like manner the dragon gives his power to a beast, with a second beast exercising all the power of the first beast, and causing the earth and the earth-dwellers to worship the first beast.

The first beast rises out of the sea, the second out of the earth. The scene of the vision of the previous chapter was in heaven but here the prophet stands upon the sand of the sea.

There are some differences as to the reading of this verse as to whether it should read "I stood" or "he stood".

If the latter rendering were correct it would have reference to the dragon, but the context would seem to show that it had reference to John even as in v.11.

The sea may have reference to the unsettled masses of men, or it may have reference to the Mediterranean Sea.

Daniel speaks of the four beasts rising out of the sea, which in the previous verse he speaks of as the great sea, a term often used of the Mediterranean Sea.

"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon its horns ten diadems, and upon its heads names of blasphemy, v.1, New Trans.

Dan. 7:24, tells us that these ten horns are ten kings.

There also we have the historical fact recorded that three of these horns were plucked up by the roots by another little horn which rises to a place of predominant power.

Thus three of these kingdoms lose their identity, and are merged into the power of the beast, or as Daniel describes it, the little horn which rises to such power.

When we come to Rev. 13, we have no account of the three kingdoms having been subdued, but simply the ten kingdoms with their crowned heads or kings.

The seven heads refer to the seven various forms under which Rome has been ruled.

The great thing that marked each and all was their open blasphemy of God.

"And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power and his seat (or throne) and great authority".

The three names of animals here given are those that were applied to the first of the world empires.

Here we have them incorporated in the fourth beast.

It is a remarkable fact that Rome did not seek to impose its characteristics upon the powers they conquered, but invariably sought to acquire any particular trait of these powers if they were calculated to improve their power and glory.

These four great world powers who succeeded each other in their place of supremacy, had received their power from God, and this was to be recognised by God's people, who were to be subject to them, as being ordained of God.

The first three had already ceased to exist at the time John wrote, beyond that the characteristics of each were to be seen and recognised in the form of the beast spoken of in v.4. Prophecy could only belong to the fourth beast now, the Roman Empire.

It is the most important one of the four, and is the one that had to do directly with the Lord Jesus, by whose presence it has been proved.

Born King of the Jews, God's throne on earth belongs to the Lord Jesus, and, although rejected by men, yet the throne is His by right and title, and will yet be given Him. The Roman Empire, with its ten attached kingdoms, whose kings give their power to the beast, only have their counterpart in that which is yet future.

It has never yet been displayed in this way.

The Roman Empire fell in the first part of the 5th century, and was divided, but not in any way which fulfilled prophecy. There has never been any union of the Roman Emperor with the ten horns as there will be in the latter day.

The barbarous nations which over-run Rome destroyed its unity. Instead of giving their power to Rome they rather used their power to destroy it.

There have been others who have sought world rule, of whom the most marked was Napoleon.

He conquered about half of Europe, and was held in much admiration, but this comes far short of what we have revealed in Rev. 13.

There all the western powers unite in giving their power to the beast.

Also in its latter form the Roman Emperor receives his power direct from Satan, and there is no call on the part of those who fear God to submit to such satanic power. "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beast", v.3.

This wounding refers to the blow sustained by the imperial power of Rome by which its universal power ceased.

For many years Rome has ceased to exist as a world ruling power, but the day will yet come when that deadly wound will be healed, and the great power of Rome will appear in its resurrected form.

As Christ went into death, but rose again in resurrection, so Satan will have his counterfeited in the head of the Roman power. Can we be surprised at the wonder which will fill the world when they behold such a transformation scene.

We have seen in recent years the rise of a Roman dictator, we have also seen how he has been made to serve the cause of Germany, but we must remember that Satan has not yet given his power to the beast, neither can the man of sin be revealed while the Holy Ghost is here in the church of God. Before the full development of evil, we shall have been taken away to be with the Lord.

I have often felt what a comfort this is to the believer.

Even our children, who would probably live to see these evil days if they were left here, will not see them if they are led to put their trust in the Lord, for they with us, will be caught up to be for ever with the Lord.

Not only will the world wonder after the beast but they will be led to worship him and thus worship him who has given this power unto the beast, even Satan himself.

Doubtless with the wars and rumours of war which will fill the earth, the world will welcome a power which promises to bring peace to the earth.

"Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?", v.4. But we are told elsewhere that when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months", v.5.

For a time, as we have seen, Jewish worship will be tolerated, but in the midst of the week the mask is thrown off, and the beast is revealed in his true character. The time for which he is allowed to continue such a blasphemous course is 42 months, this being the second half of Daniels 70th week.

Verse 6 shows the form of that blasphemy.

First it is to blaspheme God, and to blaspheme His name. There is also the blaspheming of His tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven.

How futile are all such mighty words of blasphemy.

Psalm 2 tells us that "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord will have them in derision". We are told that he makes war against the saints on earth, but against the saints in heaven he has no power whatever.

Satan lost all his power there when he was cast out of heaven.

The inhabitants of the earth (the prophetic earth of Palestine) are distinct from the nations, tribes and tongues, by whom we must understand men in general.

The earth dwellers worship the image of the beast, which is not said of the tongues, tribes and nations.

The reason of their worship lies in the fact that their names have not been written in the book of the slain Lamb which had been marked out since the foundation of the world.

The book of God's purposes and counsels here referred to is in reference to saints which have been marked out for blessing from the foundation of the world, and not before it as with us. Christians have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; their blessings being heavenly, and not earthly. There are saints however who have been marked out for earthly blessing, and who have been chosen since the foundation of the world.

It is the book of the slain Lamb because their place in God's purposes is based on Calvary.

Then in v.9, there is a call upon all who have an ear to hear, to listen to what God has to say.

V.10, gives, in a striking manner, principles which are applicable in our day, but which will have a special force in that coming day.

That which characterises the patience and faith of the saints in that day is not to resist at all.

This surely is true at all times.

If any will use the arms of flesh he shall be made subject to them.

He who draws the sword shall perish by it.

This will be a greater test for the godly Jew of that day than even for the Christian of our day, for the Jew has been accustomed to look for earthly deliverance by use of arms. In that day he must wait in faith and patience for God, and accept His way of deliverance. This will only come when the Lord Jesus comes forth as the One strong and mighty in battle, dealing personally with the power of evil.

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon", v.11. The first beast is a Gentile, the head of the Roman Empire. This second beast is a Jew who rises up out of the prophetic earth.

He is an apostate Jew of whom it is said in Daniel 11:36-38 that he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god, for he shall magnify himself above all.

2 Thess. 2:4, confirms much of the above, and shows that the temple of God, the temple at Jerusalem, will be the sphere of his abomination.

Dan. 11:38, again tells us that he will honour the god of forces, a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, etc.

How we are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus when He could say, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43). At first he is seen as a beast, a political power who has no thought of looking to God, but at the end he appears as a prophet.

This second beast answers more to the character of the anti-christ, although the two beasts are often so closely linked together that it is difficult at times to distinguish the one from the other.

Here in v.11, this beast has two horns like a lamb. Horns in scripture are generally symbols of power. In reference to the first beast they express kingly power, but often they express power without it being kingly that are denoted.

The context has to determine which.

Here we have a striking imitation of Christ who is often referred to as the Lamb.

This beast assumes the offices of both prophet and king, thus arrogating to himself the power of Christ, but those who fear God have only to hear his voice and they at once recognise that it is not the voice of the Lamb of God, but rather that of the dragon.

He seeks to take the place of Christ, and claims honour which only belongs to the Lord Jesus, but he proves to be a false Christ, and the anti-christ.

The spirit of antichrist was manifest in the days of the apostle John, and is referred to by him in his epistles. The denying that Jesus was the Christ was a special form of Jewish unbelief.

But the apostle shows that the full character of anti-christ was expressed in the denying of the Father and the Son. This marked apostasy from the revealed truths of christianity. The many antichrists of John's epistle are distinct from the antichrist of a future day.

Many may express the spirit of antichrist, but the antichrist, or man of sin, cannot be manifested until the Holy Ghost has left this scene with the church of God. This second beast exerciseth all the power of the first beast, and causeth the earth and earth dwellers to worship the first beast.

We have referred elsewhere to the fact that there will be obvious reasons for advancing the claims of the beast as an object of worship.

This false king of the Jews holds his political power at the hands of the first beast.

They work to advance the interests of each other.

In the first place this false king will be installed in power in the land of Palestine by the power of Rome.

As we have seen, in view of the threatened invasion on the part of the great Assyrian power, he makes a covenant with the Roman emperor that he would protect him from invasion. We have also seen how this will be of no avail, for the enemy will desolate the land.

This doubtless will bring the Roman emperor with all his forces to the land to support the king of the Jews.

Thus when the Lord Jesus comes in power, it will be to deal with both the beast and the false prophet, and they both will be taken alive, and be cast alive into the lake of fire. But before this takes place we have the strong delusions referred to in 2 Thess. 2, in which the people should be led to believe a lie because they refused the love of the truth. There we have no defining of two beasts, the action of the two being merged into one act, all being controlled by the power of Satan.

In Rev. 13, we have more details as to how this worship of the beast and his image is brought about.

As in the days of Elijah, fire coming down from heaven was the sign by which the true God was determined, so Satan will seek, through this false prophet, to imitate. The false prophet will have power to apparently make fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. Verse 14, shows who are deceived thereby; it is the earthdwellers.

The image is that which represents the Roman emperor. It will be claimed that it is he, and not Jehovah, who has brought deliverance, so that they have liberty to dwell in their land. The image of gold set up by Nebuchadnezzar was to be worshipped by all as setting forth the supreme power of the king, but there was no giving of breath to that image as there will be with that which is yet to come.

It is made both to speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

But as there were the faithful in Daniel's day who refused to bow, so also there will be in the latter day.

There will be those who will not worship this satanical image. That their position will be difficult and precarious we cannot doubt, but the same God who preserved His three faithful servants in the fiery furnace will again preserve many in spite of all the fiery persecution which will be brought to bear upon them.

There will also be a determined effort made to control commerce so that only those who have the mark of the beast will be permitted a means of livelihood. We may see the spirit of this thing working in our day with the registration of people and property, and the rationing and controlling which the war has brought about. Doubtless it has been a wise expediency to control the nations supplies so that there should be a fair distribution to all, but one feels how easily this will pave the way for abuse and the depriving of one's liberty. Doubtless also much needed reform has been brought about by trade unions in times past, but again we are made to realize that power in the hands of men is dangerous where there is no fear of God.

Tyranny is so often practised, and liberty of conscience is so often not allowed in any shape or form.

At the present time the trade unions demand that men shall have a ticket to enable them to work, but in the day which is coming men will be branded with the mark of the beast. How vividly this will mark out those who refuse this mark.

God alone will be able to keep any from falling a victim to the cruel persecution by which all such will be sought in order to their destruction.

In reference to the mark of the beast there has been endless speculation as to the number 666, but it is generally recognised that it will be given to the godly in that day to discern the signs of the times. That we have a trinity of evil embodied in the beast I do not doubt, and this may be expressive in the figures coming short of seven, which invariably speaks of that which is perfect. It will be a terrible test for man in that day, for to receive the mark of the beast seals the doom of all who receive it.

Men will be forced to a decision, and for the greater part their choice will be a fatal one. There will be a trinity of evil, Satan, the Roman beast and Antichrist. These each are marked by imperfection.

CHAPTER XIV

What a contrast of scenes is presented in this chapter to what we had in the last chapter.

There John sees the beast rising up out of the sea. Here the Lamb is seen standing upon mount Zion, with the remnant who have been kept and preserved through the great tribulation. They have suffered; now they have a place with Christ upon His throne.

The Lamb is the One who has suffered, but who is destined to reign.

Mount Zion expresses kingly grace upon earth. It was first brought into prominence in the days of David, and it was upon Zion that David's city was built and it was the seat of his royalty.

The glory of David's throne has passed away, but the throne of David is yet to be filled by David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus. It is constantly alluded to in the Psalms in reference to the kingdom and glory.

The principle involved in reference to Mount Zion is God's activity for His people in the ways of grace, and that at a time when all was lost under the law.

It is referred to in this way in Hebrews 12, where the position of Israel is contrasted with that of the Christian. Israel had come to Sinai, which for them, was marked by blackness and distance, but the Christian has been brought to Mount Zion, the mountain which marked God's intervention in grace.

For the Christian the application is a spiritual one, but in the day which is yet to come, God will set His King upon the holy hill of Zion (see Psalm 2).

In Rev. 14, we are shown the Lamb standing upon Mount Zion, but associated with Him are 144 thousand who have His Father's name written in their foreheads.

"Having His name, and the name of His Father written upon their foreheads", is the rendering of J.N.D.'s New Trans. It is not said their Father's name, for the relationship of God's people with God as their Father is not the subject of the book of Revelation.

Even when referring to christians as in Rev. 1 : 6, we read "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." In Johns gospel we have "My Father and your Father" but this is not the subject of Revelation and if it is not suggested in reference to the christian how much less is it the thought in reference to the Jewish remnant. In reference to those seen upon Mount Zion with the Lamb we have the number given as 144 thousand.

It sets forth a perfect administrative number who have the name of His Father in their foreheads in contrast to those of the previous chapter who had the name or mark of the beast written in their hands or upon their foreheads.

They are *not seen in heaven*, but they are closely associated with the heavenly throng.

With the anticipated blessing of this earthly remnant there is the celebration of joy in heaven.

Who sing the song we are not told; it certainly is not the church, for this song is sung before the throne, and before the beasts and elders.

There is a song sung by the elders as recorded in 5 : 9, where we have the song of the redeemed celebrating the glory of the Redeemer, also they announce how they had been made kings and priests unto God, and that they would reign, not on, but over the earth.

In Rev. 14, the song is clearly in reference to those who shall reign on the earth.

It is a new song because it celebrates promised blessings which are already appearing upon the earth.

It may be sung by the remnant of the Jews who had been slain for their testimony, and who, in 6 : 10, had sought that God would avenge their blood upon the earth dwellers. Some have thought that the company of Rev. 14, is the same as the 144 thousand of Chap. 7, but a comparison of the chapters show striking differences.

Rev. 7 reveals a company marked out from all the twelve tribes of Israel, but this is not said of the company of Rev. 14, although the numbers are identical. None upon earth could learn the song of heaven save those 144 thousand who had been brought from the earth.

They had maintained virgin purity upon the earth. They had not followed the beast or worshipped its image, but they follow the Lamb wherever it goes.

They are referred to as being bought from men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, also that in their mouth was no lie found for they were blameless.

We who are Christians have also been brought with a price, even by the precious blood of Christ.

This will also be the ground upon which this remnant will be bought.

In reference to them being firstfruits, we know from other scriptures that the elect from the ten tribes of Israel will not be brought into blessing until Christ is actually upon the throne of His glory.

There will be a time of tribulation coming upon the whole world, but the time of Jacob's trouble will come in an especial way upon the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin as the result of their rejection of Christ.

A remnant of these two tribes will be preserved and kept faithful to God, and these will be delivered and brought into blessing first, hence are spoken of as being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Only two tribes were brought back from Babylon except for isolated units of other tribes, and it was to these that Christ was presented, and also by them rejected. As the result of this, the blood of Christ will be upon them, and upon their children.

Strong delusions will be sent them that they should believe a lie because they refused the love of the truth.

They had refused to receive Him who came in His Father's name, hence when another should come in his own name, him they would receive; this will be the antichrist. Great tribulation would come upon them because of their worship of the beast and the receiving of his mark. So great will be the tribulation of those days that we are told that except those days were shortened no flesh would be saved, but for the elect's sake they shall be shortened.

The elect spoken of are the 144 thousand of Rev. 14. There had been no linking on their part with the beast or the false prophet, neither had they imbibed Satan's lie. Thus in a practical way they are said to be blameless. This is in striking contrast with those who believe a lie that they may be damned for their apostasy to God. We have no reference here to the intrinsic holiness by which the believer will be enabled to stand before God without sin or stain.

The latter clause of v.5, "before the throne of God" should be omitted, this doubtless having been inserted by the translators as being in keeping with v.3, where the song is sung before the throne, but those of v.5, are not those of v.3, who sing the song, but rather the company upon earth who learn the song of heaven.

In like manner, we who are Christians, can, even while on earth, sing the song of redemption, and that before we reach the glory.

The same principle applies in reference to the firstfruits. In James 1:18, we read, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

Again in 1 Cor. 15:13, we read of Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming.

But here in Rev. the firstfruits refer to the redeemed of the two tribes before the ten tribes are gathered in.

When the Deliverer shall come out of Sion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob we read that all Israel shall be saved. Some have thought that because they are spoken of as being redeemed or brought from the earth that they must of necessity have a place in heaven but this is not so of necessity. As Christians, we are spoken of as having been redeemed from this present evil world, and doubtless this is the sense in which it is referred to here.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred and tongue, and people.

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him: for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters", v's. 6, 7.

Here we have a call upon men to acknowledge God as creator; this is very different to the gospel which is ours to preach in our present day.

Now it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe, using the sons of men, those who have been made the recipients of grace, to make it known to others.

Angels are not used to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God. In the day to come, however, angels will be used to assert God's claims upon His creatures.

James says, "Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well : the devils also believe and tremble". James shows that there must be faith shown by works. Elsewhere we are shown that there must needs be repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus Cornelius was a man who feared God, but he needed to hear words of Peter by which he must be saved. Peter shows that through Christ alone remission of sins was preached.

After the church has gone there will be a fearful wave of apostasy sweeping over the scene, and the question well may be asked,

"Shall He find faith upon the earth"?

The vital question of that day will be the recognition and worship of God, or that of the beast.

Here there is a call upon men to fear and worship God, for the hour of His judgment is come.

The faith of the saints of that day will be put to no ordinary test.

Endurance to the end will mark and evidence true faith. It is said that the word dwell is not the same as hitherto noticed as having a moral force, but it is striking that they should be the first class appealed to.

To the earth dwellers that call comes in vain, yet they are left without excuse, and could never say that they had not been warned.

From the nations and tribes etc, there will doubtless be many who will respond to this call and render to God the worship of which He alone is worthy.

Then in v.8, we have the announcement of the fall of Babylon.

That great religious power has wrought great havoc among the nations in the corruptions which they have been made to imbibe.

This great power will be destroyed by the greater civil power of Rome as we are clearly shown elsewhere. Many may feel that she richly deserves her doom, and so she does, but we must remember that the power which rends her does so in hatred to God and all that bears the name of God. For this reason God's wrath comes upon those who acknowledge and follow this power in its opposition to God. "If any one do homage to the beast and its image, and receive a mark upon his forehead or upon his hands, he also shall drink of the wine of the fury of God prepared unmix'd in the cup of his wrath, and he shall be tormented in fire and brimstone before the holy angels, and before the Lamb, v's. 9, 10, New. Trans.

The wine here referred to is in striking contrast to the wine of the religious power of Rome.

That cup spoke of the earthly pleasures offered them, but this cup is one which is filled with the fury of God.

It speaks of His wrath which will fall upon all who worship the beast. Verses 10, 11 show that God's judgment is eternal.

It is certainly not annihilation, for we are told that they are tormented day and night.

This is the portion of both the beast and false prophet as we are clearly shown in Chap. 19, but it is also the portion of all who follow the beast.

The devil himself is not cast there until after the thousand years, and then this fearful place is described as the place where the beast and false prophet are (not where they were). They are still there after the thousand years have run their course. "Here is the endurance of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus", v.12 New Trans. As before stated, it will be a real testing time for the saints of God who are living upon the earth, and only where there is true living faith will there be the enduring to the end, and obedience shown to God's commands.

The latter clause shows that their faith was similar to that shown by the Lord Jesus.

The Psalms present the path and sufferings of the remnant of the latter days, and we have the Spirit of Christ identified with them as sharing in His day the sufferings they will endure in the latter days. Then in v.13, we have another class signalled out, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them", v.13.

This verse is often applied to the saints of the present day, but in its strict application it can only refer to those who suffer martyrdom after the church has been taken to glory. According to Jewish hopes and expectations, death would be the end of all their hopes, but here we are shown that there is a special blessing resting upon such.

Later in our book we are shown that they live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

They, like Moses of old, lose their earthly portion, but are given a heavenly one.

They are made to rest from their labours, but their works follow them.

They will be richly rewarded for all they have suffered and laboured for, while here upon earth.

Denied a place upon earth by men, they are owned of the Lord in heaven.

They may die, but they die in the Lord.

They reign with Christ, not on the earth, but over it.

Of course we may apply the principle to those who die in our own day.

If saved, they die in the Lord, and to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Rest from labour will also be the labourer's reward, also the Lord will reward all that has been done, and suffered for Him.

This will be displayed in the day of His glory, when He appears with His saints in glory.

Then He will be admired in all His saints.

Then in our last few verses we have two closing scenes. First we have the harvest, then we have the vintage. These complete the seven distinct divisions we have in this chapter, covering God's dealings with His earthly people, also those who are opposed to God in various ways.

First we have the godly Jewish remnant associated with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

Second we have God's testimony to the Gentile nations scattered all over the world, as well as to those who are settled in the prophetic land of Palestine.

Third we have the fall of Babylon.

Fourth, the fearful doom of those who worship the beast and his image, or receive the mark of his name.

Fifth, the blessedness from that time, of those who die in the Lord.

Sixth, the discriminating process of the harvest.

Seventh, the awful affliction of vengeance on religious apostasy.

Verses 14-16, give us the harvest of the earth, and has to do with both good and bad.

It may be compared to what we have in Luke 17, where we read of one being taken and the other left.

Here we have the white cloud, and on the cloud one sitting like the Son of Man.

The reaper is associated with the cloud, which in itself is a symbol of the divine presence.

The resemblance to the Son of Man reminds us of John 5, where we are shown that the Lord Jesus is the Son of Man, to whom God has committed all authority and judgment.

He is not now seen wearing a crown of thorns, and being made a curse, but He has a golden crown upon His head, crowned with divine glory and honour, On His head is the golden crown, while in His hand is the sharp sickle.

Then there is the cry to thrust in the sickle and reap, and in v.16, we have the instant obedience to this command. He who was once in this scene, walking in the obedience of perfect manhood, is still seen in this same character of dependance.

We read in Matt. 13, in reference to the harvest, that there will be the gathering of the harvest into the garner, but that the chaff will be burnt up with unquenchable fire. Then in v.18, we have another angel coming out from the altar, which had power over fire; "and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.

Where the sacrifice is refused there can be no mercy. The altar, which speaks of atonement for the believer, speaks only of judgment for the unbeliever.

Here too, we have a vine of the earth, but not God's vine. The Lord Jesus was God's true vine, and the branches could only bear fruit by abiding in Him.

This was fruit which God could accept, but in man's vine there were but the clusters of wild grapes, the fruits of nature, and which were fully ripe for judgment. We read elsewhere of God bringing a vine out of Egypt, and planting it in the land of Palestine, also that Judah was His choice plant, but when God

looked for fruit which He could accept, He beheld only wild grapes, the fruits of an evil nature, and which were so hateful to Himself.

Here in Rev. 14, we have a similar thing, only that it probably goes wider, also we see there is unmixed judgment.

The grapes are gathered and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

Then follows an awful figure of carnage such as the world has never before witnessed.

The reference to the city would doubtless show that this fearful judgment takes place near the city of Jerusalem, but we read of the blood coming out of the winepress even to the horses bridles and that by the space of one thousand, six hundred furlongs.

This stream of blood, about 200 miles long, is the length of Palestine, and doubtless shows that the whole of the land will be drenched in blood.

In that land there will be vast armies gathered, and all opposed to the Lamb.

Rev. 19, clearly shows that it is the Lord Jesus who smites the nations, and that it is He who treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

In 1 Thess. 5 :3, we read, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety : then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Men have may despised the Lord Jesus, and may still despise Him, but in that day they will reap even as they have sowed.

CHAPTER XV

We now come to a new division of this book, and chapters 15 and 16 give us the wrath or vengeance of God upon His enemies. They are still preparatory judgments, and we do not get in them the judgments of the Lamb personally.

The things recorded in these two chapters do not form a continuation of what we have in Chap. 14, but rather they run consecutive.

They may not commence at one and the same time, but clearly the pouring out of the vials takes place during the trumpet period; for as we have already seen, the seven trumpets take us on to the coming of the Lord Jesus. The sphere of the vial judgments may be wider than that of the trumpets, for we have no reference to the third part as with the trumpets, and which is used to set forth the Roman earth.

It has been truly said that these vials take up rather the outward civil history or secular condition of men, although the same thing may, in certain cases, have both a religious bearing and a secular one. Here, as elsewhere in this book, we find the faithfulness of God towards His people before we have the execution of the judgments.

We are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus in reference to His people that not one hair of their head should perish, and this will be seen, though the faithful may be killed, as many of them actually will be, because of their testimony.

Satan, through his evil servants, may be allowed to kill the body, but there his power ends.

Here we are shown God's ultimate purpose in reference to these faithful saints, and that before they are called to meet their trial of affliction.

Here, in his vision, John sees a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had gained the victory over the beast, and over its image, and over the number of its name, standing upon the sea of glass, having harps of God.

Doubtless the figure is taken from the brazen sea of the temple, but there are striking differences.

Whether it be the laver of the tabernacle, or the molten sea of the temple, these were both used to wash the hands and feet of the priests before they did God's service in the house of God.

So also the Lord Jesus poured water into a bason in order to wash the feet of His disciples, but in each and every instance it had reference to the cleansing of earthly defilement.

Here, however, in Rev. 15, we have an heavenly scene, and an established condition of purity is presented to us where nothing can defile.

It is said to be mingled with fire because of the fiery tribulation through which those who now stood on it, had passed through while they were upon the earth.

To the outward eye of men they had been overcome by the enemy, but God shows them to be conquerors. They had remained faithful even unto death.

As to who it is that are here referred to, we are plainly told. It is those who have gained the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of its name.

Thus it can have no reference to the Christian, for he will have been translated from this scene to be with the Lord and that before the man of sin is revealed.

It refers rather to the God fearing remnant who will be kept faithful to their God when all else is against them. Their victory is shown to be threefold.

In the first place they refuse to recognise the claims of the first beast.

Then they are not deceived in reference to the setting up of the image by the false prophet, notwithstanding his power of deceit.

Last of all there is the commercial side in reference to the receiving of the mark of the beast.

There are many who would not be ensnared by the religious deceptions of the false prophet, but who would not stand out when it was a question of their living.

They have no principle which would enable them to stand: to lose everything, or even anything, rather than yield, hence they received the mark to avoid conflict with the beast, and thus it is that they submit to his claims. This remnant however will not recognise the claims of the beast, neither are they deceived by the false prophet, also they will not have received the mark of the beast even to enable them to obtain a living.

They, like the Hebrew worthies of old, are prepared to suffer rather than yield, and many of them die, in faithfulness to God rather than yield to what they know is false.

Now they have a standing before God in absolute purity, and have harps of victory in their hands for God has given them the victory.

A new song also is put into their mouth, even praise to their God.

In the song there is a wonderful blending of the songs of Moses and of the Lamb.

The song of Moses was one of triumph over the powers of evil by God's judgments.

The song of the Lamb is one of exaltation of the rejected Messiah, of the suffering One, like whom they had suffered.

"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty".

Here we have the God of the Old Testament, Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai. We have no mention of the name of Father, that by which He is revealed to the Christian, neither do we have Christians singing this song.

They will, as already stated, have been taken to heaven before the beast is revealed.

They also will have a song to sing as expressed by the song of the elders in Rev. 5, but the strain of their song is far deeper.

Those who sing the song of Rev. 15, are doubtless composed of converted Jews, who have been faithful to the Lord even unto death, but who are now shown to be at rest, and able to sing this song of triumph even as did the children of Israel on the other side of the Red Sea when God had wrought so wonderfully for them.

But they also sing the song of the Lamb.

Here we have a blending of the two songs, first in reference to deliverance from earthly oppression, and then in celebration of the Lamb's exaltation on high. In the first place they celebrate the works of God, that which is manifest to all, then, "just and true are thy ways". We have these two things referred to in Psalm 103:7.

"He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.

There were the works which were manifest to all Israel, but the ways of the Lord was only understood by His servant Moses. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

The words "King of saints" should read King of nations, and this is in

keeping with the next chapter where we are shown that the vials are to be poured out particularly upon the Gentiles.

As Christians we recognise the Lord Jesus to be the King but scripture never speaks of Him as being our King. Of course, as servants, we are ever subject to Him, but we are destined to reign with Him.

The Queen of England would be subject to the King, but she is not viewed as being one of his subjects, but she, as associated with her husband, shares in his glory and reigns with him.

In like manner we form His bride even now, and will be linked with Him as His wife before He takes, and rules in His kingdom.

As kings and priests we shall reign with Him, and not be reigned over by Him.

Then the question is asked, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For thou only art holy : for all nations shall come and worship before Thee : for Thy judgments are made manifest", v.4. It has been pointed out that there are two words used to express holiness.

There is that which implies absolute separation from evil as in Rev. 4, where we read "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty", and the word is generally used in this sense, but here in Rev. 15, holiness also implies mercy, which is quite another thought. Here He is presented as the holy One who is full of mercy.

The spirit of God enables them to look on to the end, to the time of millennial glory.

"All nations shall come and worship before Thee : for Thy judgments are made manifest".

In Isaiah 26, we are told that when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. While favour is shown to the wicked he will not learn righteousness.

Many have thought that God's love and grace as now known to the Christian, will ultimately spread and fill the earth, and that the gospel will so triumph that it will bring conversion to the whole world.

Alas for the vain hopes of men, be they ever so sincere. The wars of recent years should dispel all such hopes. The world, as a whole, is condemned already, and must be brought into judgment before it is ultimately brought into blessing.

Evil will, after the church of God has left the earth, rise to heights never before reached, and the powers of evil must be crushed with overwhelming judgment before there can be any true and lasting peace upon the earth. The mass of men will come under the judgment of God, and it will be the remnant of the nations which will ultimately be brought to true repentance before God, and finally be brought into blessing.

Thus the ultimate results are shown before the judgments actually fall.

"And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened", v.5. In 11 :19, we had the opening of the temple in heaven with the revealing of the ark of His covenant.

There we had the pledge of God's faithfulness towards His earthly people, but in Ch. 15, there is no ark seen.

Here the enemies of God's people are more in question, and the temple is opened to manifest God's wrath upon them. There are seven angels seen coming out of the temple, and in them is filled up the wrath of God that is spoken of in v.1. It is a complete judgment, and perfect in its solemnity. They are clothed in white linen, setting forth their spotless purity and cleanness in God's sight.

As another has said, "It was that which should have marked Babylon, but what was deplorably lacking in her. The golden girdles speak of service rendered in divine righteousness.

"And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever", v.7.

It speaks of the judicial power of God in creation, but we have no revelation yet of the Lamb.

The vials or really bowls or cups, have reference to the vessels used for the pouring out of the drink offerings, but now they are used for the pouring out of God's wrath.

When God reveals Himself in the fulness of His wrath who is able to stand in His presence?

No priest even has a place now, neither is there any intercession on behalf of the guilty.

Truly it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and so men will find to their cost when they are made to feel the wrath of God falling upon them. That wrath abides upon those who refuse to believe on Christ even now, but there is a day coming when it will fall in overwhelming judgment upon the guilty sons of men.

CHAPTER XVI

In reading this chapter we may note the similarity of the vial judgments with that of the trumpet judgments, although there are striking points of difference to be seen. In the main they cover the same period, but there is no mention of the third part as there was with the trumpet judgments. The vial judgments seem to be more general in their character and are not confined to the Roman earth as were the trumpets.

The first four have the same objects of judgment as the first four trumpets, and effect men, the earth, the sea, the rivers and the sun.

Again the 5th and 6th vial judgments correspond with the 5th and 6th trumpets, effecting as they do, both the beast and the Euphrates.

The 7th in each case carries us on to the end immediately prior to the setting up of Christ's kingdom.

We have voices, thunderings, lightnings and the earthquake. In the first verse there is the command to the seven angels that they should pour out their vials or bowls of the fury of God upon the earth.

Doubtless the earth in this verse would embrace the whole sphere where God had been known.

Great privileges had been enjoyed, and light had shone in a wonderful way, but now the light had become darkness, and the nations where God had been known and recognised had completely apostatised from God, hence they are given up in His wrath to judgment. The first vial is poured out upon the men who had fallen under Satan's snare with respect to social and religious evil. Paul could warn Timothy in respect to false doctrine, that "their word will eat as doth a canker", a sore that eats and corrupts as it goes, and this will characterize those who had once been the subject of healthy influence of God's teaching, but who now had succumbed to false doctrine. They refused to bow to the Lord Jesus, and received him who came in his own name, and now they are made to reap even as they had sowed.

The second angel pours out his vial on the sea, on the nations which are outside the prophetic earth.

In the day yet to come, Judea will be the scene of the manifestation of God's ways; it is then called the earth. The sea is the mass of nations outside this prophetic earth. "And it became as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea".

In the living the blood is the life, but that which ought to have sustained life here becomes the expression of death. Every living soul died in the sea.

Here it is probably moral death rather than physical. There will be a giving up of even the profession of God, and apostasy will come to an head as never before. In the pouring out of the third vial, the rivers and fountains are affected and become as blood.

It has been truly said that the rivers represent people made distinct the one from the other, as under the influence of certain principles, while the fountains refer to the springs of a nation's prosperity.

All these active principles assume the form of death.

We may see the principle of this in the communism of such countries as Russia.

There is the giving up of God, and of every institution established by God.

All restraint is cast off, and morality in every way is flouted; can we wonder that all these things end in darkness and death.

Life is treated as of little or no account, and men are subjected to tyranny and oppression of the worst kind.

Liberty, which was the cry of the people, is supplanted by the worst forms of slavery.

Men are not allowed to think for themselves, and any expression of opposition to their leaders is ruthlessly dealt with.

Such is the spirit which will characterize the nations as a whole, whether it be the North Eastern powers, or the nations forming the great Latin Kingdom.

There are many who would say in their ignorance "Where is God to allow such a state of things?"

In verses 5-7, we are shown the reason. "And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Thou art righteous, who art and wast, the holy one, that thou hast judged so; for they have poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; they are worthy."

God was shown to be righteous in the pouring out of His wrath upon the sons of men because of their iniquity, but God was also shown to be merciful in holiness.

He still remained as He ever had been, the Holy one.

As in 11 :17, the words "art to come" should be omitted.

Holiness is here connected with mercy as in 15 :4, and God in His merciful holiness is extolled before the following vials are poured out.

In reference to the expression, the angel of the waters, we learn from 17 :15, that the waters are peoples and multitudes, and nations, and tongues, so that our chapter would show that they are controlled by God in His providence through the angel.

God's righteousness in judging the nations is given in v.6.

"For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy".

"They are worthy" simply means that they richly deserved the judgment which was being poured out upon them.

They had been guilty of shedding the blood of saints and prophets, and now God was visiting them with righteous retribution.

They were reaping even as they had sowed.

"And I heard the altar saying, yea, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments", v.7 New Trans.

In 9 :6, we read how John sees under the altar souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and the cry of the martyred remnant was "how long" before they would be avenged.

That altar had witnessed their afflictions and sacrifice, and now called for vengeance even as the ground which received the shed blood of Abel cried for vengeance.

It is the response of the altar to the cry of the angel of the waters, showing that the one is in harmony with the other.

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire", v.8.

The sun is an emblem of supreme authority.

The New Trans. gives it "and it was given to it to burn men" etc.

It clearly refers to the tryannical exercise of this supreme power which evidently exercises a despotism which causes terrible trials of affliction upon those who are under its crushing power.

Men will be made to feel that God's hand is connected with these plagues, but instead of humbling themselves before God, and repenting to give Him glory, they rather blaspheme the name of God because of their pain and suffering.

Men are slow to appreciate God's mercy, and the rich blessings He so freely bestows upon them, but they turn in bitterness, and blame God for any and every thing they have to endure in the way of suffering.

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat (or rather throne) of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain", v.10

This judgment is a staggering blow at the throne of the beast, and leads to his kingdom being filled with darkness.

The beast is not yet dealt with personally, he being reserved for judgment at the hands of the Lord at His coming.

Still there is no repentance produced, although men are made to gnaw their tongues with pain.

Under the fourth vial, the name of God was blasphemed, doubtless through

His servants who owned and maintained His name, but now they blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, neither do they repent of their deeds.

“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared”, v.12.

The Euphrates was the eastern limit of the land as promised in Gen. 15 :18, and was also the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire.

This river formed the great barrier to which they invariably carried their conquests, but under the sixth seal this barrier is removed, and the way is opened for the inroads of the kings of the east.

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.”

We have had this trinity of evil brought before us in Chaps. 12 and 13.

First we had the dragon, the open adversary of Christ, then the beast rising out of the sea, the head of the Roman Empire; lastly we have the beast rising up out of the land of Palestine, the antichrist, the Jewish king, here referred to in Chap. 16, as the false prophet.

Here we are told that “they are the spirit of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty”, v.14.

We learn elsewhere that the Jews, through their king, will make a covenant with the Roman power to protect them against invasion by the great Assyrian power, but we are plainly told that it will not stand.

The desolator will over-run the land like a flood, and bring ruin and devastation in his train, but there will be the gathering of the armies of the western nations to oppose them.

Thus there will be vast armies gathered in Palestine to participate in the great and terrible conflicts of that day.

Verse 16, tells us that He gathered them together unto a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

There is some doubt as to whether it should read he, or they gathered, but it need prove no difficulty.

If he is correct, then it would simply mean that God Almighty gathered them through the intervention of the unclean spirits, but if the word should be they, then it refers to the fact that they had accomplished that, which in v.14, they had set out to do.

But between these two verses we have a remarkable interruption “Behold, I come as a thief, Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame,” v.15.

This is the character in which the Lord will come to the world.

He will come to them as an unwelcome visitor, and take men by surprise.

It is not the way in which He comes for the christian.

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief,” 1 Thess. 5 :4.

The Lord’s coming will be a source of joy for the godly Jewish remnant of a future day, for deliverance comes to them through judgment upon their enemies.

There is a blessing pronounced upon those who watch, and who keep their garments lest they be naked, and they see his shame.

The world will be naked to their shame and will be exposed to judgment.

Then as to the name of Armageddon, this was the name of the ancient hill adjoining the valley of Megiddo, and was the scene of the great battle fought by Barak by which God gave a striking victory over their enemies (read Judges 5 :18).

It is here where the beast and his armies will be gathered in opposition to the Lord Jesus, for while Satan through his evil spirits, gather these nations to oppose the inroads of the North Eastern powers, yet really Satan is seeking to gather all the forces of men under his control to oppose the claims of the Lord Jesus.

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne saying, It is done,” v.17.

This judgment seems more severe and penetrating than the previous judgments.

It may be a blow upon Satanic powers, for Satan is prince of the power of the air, although at this time he will have been cast out from the heavens.

It has also been suggested that the air being so essential to man's life in this scene, this blow may effect the very life breath of man.

The great voice saying, "It is done" seems to suggest that things are now drawing to a climax.

"And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great," v.18

We had these same things mentioned at the end of the seals, 8 :5, also at the end of the trumpets, 11 :19.

They evidently take place immediately before the coming of Christ in Person.

I have wondered whether the earthquake is the same as that spoken of in Zech, 14, only there it seems to imply that the cleaving of the mount of Olives is due to the earthquake, and follows the touching of Mount Olivet by the feet of the Lord.

Here in Rev. 16, it may refer to a vast and unexampled convulsion of civil associations as a learned servant of the Lord has said, a breaking up, not only of what is here spoken of as the great city, which refers to all that was established within the Roman empire, but we are also told that the cities of the nations fell, that is to say, it was the ruin of all that the nations outside Rome had built up politically (Kelly on Rev., page 353).

Then we have great Babylon coming into remembrance before God.

The term Babylon the great has reference to the moral or idolatrous character of the professing church, or really apostate christendom, headed up under the papacy of Rome.

Here we find it comes up in remembrance before God.

There is no cup of salvation for her, but a cup of the wine of the fierceness of God's wrath.

As to the time and manner of her judgment this is reserved for the following two chapters.

Last of all in our chapter we find every island fleeing away and mountains ceasing to exist.

Isolated powers are not exempt from God's power in judgment while great powers also, as set forth by the mountains, have no place when God's works to remove them.

This is followed by the great hail out of heaven upon men.

This may have reference to God's judgment upon the great Assyrian or North Eastern power which will be dealt with after the judgment has been executed upon the beast and false prophet.

It cannot be a reference to the final rebellion after the Millennium, for there men are destroyed by fire, and next appear before the great white throne without a word to say for themselves.

Here in our chapter we find men blaspheming God because of the heavy plague of hail.

Instead of repentance, the hearts of men are shown to be hardened and going from bad to worse, and there needs to be the crushing of rebellious men before the Lord Jesus can rule as the Prince of Peace over this world.

CHAPTER XVII

At the close of our last chapter, in connection with the last vial, we were told that the great Babylon came to remembrance before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

In chapters 17 and 18, we have the character of great Babylon portrayed, and the judgment that falls upon her, with the effect of that judgment upon those with whom she had been so closely connected.

We are shown also in what way she is linked with the first beast, and also the way in which she meets her doom.

We have the further announcement of her fall, and the effect, as we have said, it has upon kings and commerce in general, in chapter 18.

It has been truly said that while great Babylon is only one upon whom God's judgment falls, yet that she is the most important in God's sight, hence so much detail in reference to her character and judgment.

She is Satan's great counterfeit, and expresses everything that is false and corrupt in contrast to Christ and His true church.

In this connection it is important to note that in 21 :9, it is one of the seven angels which have the vials that says "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

Here in Rev. 17, it is also one of the same seven angels who says, "Come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore."

That which claimed to be the bride of Christ, God here shows to be a great whore, or harlot.

Again in 21 :10, it speaks of the true church as being a great city, and the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

Rev. 18, likens the great Babylon to a great city, but here it is shown to be connected with the earth.

There is nothing heavenly or of God marking her at all.

She is shown to be sitting upon the many waters.

Verse 15, tells us, in reference to these waters that they are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

In the very sphere where God's light had shone so brightly, kings and rulers are led away by the corruptions of this corruptress, while the inhabitants of the earth, apparently the earth dwellers, have their senses blurred from the discerning of the mind of God.

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns," v.3.

There were no springs of refreshment in the wilderness or desert, whereby the holy desires of a renewed heart could be satisfied, but there was everything there to answer to the carnal desires of this corrupt woman.

Here the woman is shown to be ruling the beast, later the order was to be reversed.

As to the beast, we have already had it portrayed in Ch. 13.

It is clearly the revived Roman empire, but seen in its satanic form.

Its character is shown to be in opposition to God, for it is full of names of blasphemy.

Later we are told that the seven heads are seven mountains, so that we have a clear reference to the seven hilled city of Rome.

As to the woman, we are told in v.4, that she is arrayed in purple and scarlet colour.

Purple was the imperial colour of the Roman emperors, while scarlet speaks of human glory and splendour.

What a striking contrast we have to the true bride of Christ as set forth in chap. 19:8.

"To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints."

This woman however, was clothed in that which spoke of imperial power with all earthly glory and splendour, decked moreover with gold and precious stones and pearls.

There was everything to make her prominent, and to bring her in dazzling array before the world, but with all her pomp and glory we have our attention

drawn by the Spirit of God to the golden cup which was in her hand, which was full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

Abominations ever have reference to idols, and no system has ever tended to more idolatry than that of Rome.

As the beast was said to be full of names of blasphemies, so this woman has a cup full of abominations and filthiness.

This woman has a golden cup in her hand for she professed to have that, which was divine and of God to offer to her suppliants, but in reality she offered everything which was distasteful and hateful to God.

There were two things which especially marked her.

First there was idolatry, and then there was fornication.

In reading the history of the churches we were shown that the doctrine of Baalim, who taught the people to commit fornication was first seen in the church of Pergamos.

In Thyatira, we had the introduction of Jezebel, who forced idolatry upon the people.

In the papal church of Rome, both these evils were united.

There had been the decline of the church, a going from bad to worse.

Here in Rev. 17, we have idolatry first mentioned as being the greatest evil in God's sight for it displaced Him in the heart's affections.

But with the heart's affection gone, there follows uncleanness of fornication.

There is an unholy linking with the world, a world which is opposed to the Father.

In her becoming espoused to the world, she proves herself unfaithful to Christ, to whom she professed to be espoused.

"And upon her forehead was a name written 'Mystery, Babylon the great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth'," v.5.

There had previously been the revealing of the mystery concerning the true church through Paul.

Now there is the revealing of the mystery of Satan's great counterfeit.

The true church is subject to Christ, but this false church is in the place of rule and authority.

Also, as another has already said. Whatever evil thing was used by Satan for the purpose of ensnaring the affections from Christ, whatever idolatrous object took His place, she is the mother of them all.

Babylon is the great parent of all worldly systems.

"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration," v.6.

No wonder John was led to marvel at such a sight.

He could understand some inroads of evil into the church, but to be shown that she was drunken with the blood of the saints, in fact that the blood of all the martyrs or witnesses of Jesus could, and would be, laid to her account, filled him with wonder.

Pagan Rome could be cruel in the afflictions they put upon the saints of God, but the church of Rome has far exceeded all that has ever gone before, and the persecutions of that church will doubtless be worse still after the true church has been taken to glory, but then it will fall upon the witnesses of Jesus rather than upon the saints comprising the true church.

There is no hatred so bitter as religious hatred for opposition to its own doctrines. It is true that it is the secular power that actually puts the saints of God to death, but it is at the instigation of the religious power, which God holds to be responsible as having the greater sin.

As Jerusalem was guilty of the blood of the prophets in former days, so now it is in Babylon that all the blood of the saints was found; hence it was so hateful to God.

So again in reference to the putting to death of the Lord Jesus.

The Gentile power, as represented by Pilate was responsible for His crucifixion, and God will not hold them guiltless, but it was at the instigation of the Jewish rulers. Hence Peter could say when addressing Jews, "Whom ye have taken with wicked hands and crucified." The Lord Himself could say to Pilate, "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin," John 19:11.

And the angel said unto me, "Wherefore didst thou marvel?"

I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns," v.7.

John was filled with wonder in respect to the woman, but in the explanation given by the angel we have not only the mystery of the woman revealed, but also of the beast which carried her.

"The beast which thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go into destruction; and they who dwell on the earth, whose names are not written from the founding of the world in the book of life, shall wonder, seeing the beast, that it was, and is not, and shall be present," v.8 New Trans.

Here John is carried forward in spirit beyond his own day.

He is shown that this Roman empire, which had been in power for so long was about to cease; that it was destined to rise again, but that its future reappearance would be of Satanic origin, and that it was doomed to destruction as shown in Ch. 19 : v. 20.

The various countries and peoples which composed that kingdom may remain, but its imperial unity would cease.

Earth dwellers will wonder when they see the rise of this great power, but the elect will not be deceived.

Their names had been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.

Here we have a class of saints clearly marked out in distinction to the christian.

We who now believe have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; marked out in heaven and chosen to form the heavenly bride of Christ.

But with the forming of the earth, God also destined that there should be an earthly people marked out for earthly blessing.

It is these that would be kept from being deceived when the world, as a whole, would succumb to the power of the beast.

Verse 9, shows that spiritual intelligence is needed to discern the import of the things which are here revealed.

In the first place the geographical city of Rome is clearly shown as the centre from which this woman rules.

As to the sphere of her rule, we have previously been shown that it was extended to the nations.

Although she is called Babylon, this description could not refer to the Chaldean capital of old, for that city was built on the plain of Shinar, whereas this city was built upon seven hills.

Rome, however is still called in this day, as in the past, the city of seven hills.

This has reference to the various forms of government under which Rome had rule.

The first began in 32 B.C. with kings; these were followed by consuls, then dictators, decemoirs, military tribunes and lastly emperors.

In John's time the first five had already passed away. The sixth which had been set up by Julius Caesar, was still existing under Domitian, and would continue until the complete fall of the empire in 476 A.D. The seventh is noticed as coming and continuing but a short time.

This has been thought to refer to the rise of Napoleon. Although born in Corsica, he was an Italian by birth, and he made wonderful conquests, but they were shortlived.

There has been no other who could in any way answer to this seventh king, neither has there been any great power that has ever gained supremacy, passing away, and being revived as we have it recorded of this power of Rome.

"And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition". The beast in this Satanic form is yet to come.

Other scriptures show that while the Holy Ghost is here indwelling the church, there is a power present which hinders the revealing of the man of sin.

With the removal of the Holy Spirit with the church to glory will follow the great apostasy, and this will open the way for the assumption of full control by the beast. In some respects he will be seen to be one of the seven, as he will assume imperial rule, but in other ways he will be quite distinct from all that has ever gone before hence he is spoken of as being the eighth.

The previous powers had been ordained of God, and the Christian was therefore to be subject to such, but this last beast was of satanic origin, and to

subject oneself to his diabolical power would be to deny all that was of God. The doom of those that yielded to this evil power would be sealed for ever.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast”, v.12.

The ten horns are to have their power at the same time with the beast.

There were no kings, ruling in their own power, tolerated under the past rule of Rome and the kingdoms which afterwards arose out of the destruction of the Roman Empire could clearly have no reference to these ten horns. Those kings combined to destroy the Roman Empire rather than share its power.

Here we are shown that in the last days there will be a confederacy of kingdoms with a head exercising power in the midst of them.

The hour referred to simply expresses a set time, it may be short, or it may be long.

In the past there was an empire without kings, followed by kingdoms after the empire had fallen, but in the coming day, when this power is again revived, in its satanic form, these kings will be linked with the beast, and both will go on together.

“These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast”, v.13.

Rivalry among nations will have ceased, at least among the western nations. They will be of one mind, but only to give their power and strength to the beast. The mind which was in Christ Jesus, and which should be found in every true believer, is sadly lacking in these kings. Instead, they unite with the beast, to oppose Christ.

“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of Lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful”, v.14.

The details of this great assault against the Lamb are given in chapter 19.

Here the fact is briefly stated, first that they should make war with the Lamb, also that they would be overcome of Him, because He is Lord of Lords, and King of kings. As to those who are with the Lord, this can have no reference to angels, for angels are never called.

Only of men is this expression used.

They only have been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light, out of a lost condition, and saved by grace. For angels who have sinned there is no redemption, while those who have not fallen do not need it.

It can only refer to the heavenly saints who have already been taken to heaven, comprising not only Christians, but also the Old Testament saints, for those who are Christ's at His coming would doubtless embrace all the redeemed.

There will also be some who have been slain during the tribulation, and who will be raised prior to the Lord's coming to execute judgment.

They form part of the first resurrection and are destined to reign with Christ.

All have been called in time, all too have been chosen, some before, and others since the world's foundation.

They also have been proved faithful by the way they have endured. Now they have the recompense; they are found with the Lamb at His coming.

“And he saith into me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues”, v.15.

Here we have the sphere of her influence, but as in the dark ages, so will it be to a greater degree in the coming day. When she acquires power over nations she becomes so haughty and intolerant as to become unbearable. It was this which led the princes and rulers to turn against her at the time of the reformation, but then, although they destroyed much of her power, they still tolerated her existence, In the coming day however, they will utterly destroy her. “And the ten horns which thou sawest upon (or, and) the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire”, v.16.

Doubtless the church of Rome will be instrumental in bringing about this linking of the ten kingdoms with the power of Rome. Whilst they will tolerate her rule for a time, when their purpose has been served, these kingdoms, with the beast, will turn upon her with positive hatred, and strip her of all her vast wealth rewarding her even as she has done to others, that is, destine her to the fire.

Doubtless this will take place at the end of the first half of the last week, when the beast will break his covenant with the Jewish nation to allow the temple

worship of Jehovah and seek divine honours for himself to the exclusion of all others.

The beast then makes war with the saints; this will be mainly through the second beast in the land of Palestine, and relative to the setting up of the image. At the same time a war of extermination will be made by the ten kings in conjunction with the beast, against the apostate church, which maintains, at least outwardly, the name of Christ, and who asserts God's claims as being invested in her.

These kings destroy her not merely because of her corruptions, but because she bears God's name which they have learned to hate.

At the same time they are but fulfilling God's will although unconsciously, God is really using them to destroy the false church.

In uniting with the beast, and giving their power to him, they were but fulfilling God's own word.

Heaven and earth will pass away before one word of God shall fail.

What a foundation for the saint to rest upon.

He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrains the remainder.

There is no zeal of God in the performing of His word, but rather contempt and hatred for Him, and it is because of this that they themselves are afterwards brought into judgment by God Himself.

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth", v.18. Thus this woman is clearly identified with the city of Rome, from which centre she has exercised her evil rule for so many years over the kings of the earth. As her power increases, so does her arrogant demands upon men. As to the way her judgment effects various classes, we have the fullest details in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII

In our previous chapter we had presented to us the human agents by which Babylon was destroyed. In this chapter we are shown that God was the author of that judgment, although He does, in His providence, use the kings to effect His purposes.

We have in this chapter, the account of Babylon's fall, and the final judgment which follows that fall. We also see the way in which others, who have been linked with her in guilty intimacy, are affected by that fall.

It is remarkable to note how closely angels are connected with all that concerns this woman.

We are shown elsewhere that angels take special account of God's order in creation.

A woman assuming any public association with man in a religious way was to wear a covering on her head in token of her subjection to man who is viewed as a representative person.

As to God's order, we have in the ascending scale, first the woman, then the man, then Christ, and last of all God Himself.

As to the reason which God gives as to why the woman should be subject to the man, we have it clearly given in I Tim. 2:13, 14, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression".

God gave Adam the first place, and when the woman acted in independence of the man, it was to fall into sin.

1 Cor. 11, shows that whether praying or prophesying, the woman must wear a covering, but not the man because he is the image and glory of God.

The man and the woman are taken up in a representative way as setting forth Christ and the church.

In Rev. 18, we have the woman professedly setting forth the church, but transgressing God's order in creation. In v.1, we have an angel of a very high order coming down from heaven, having great power, and lightening the earth with his glory. It doubtless is the Lord Jesus, not revealed openly as in our next chapter, but taking angelic form.

It is also said of this angel that he had great power; so in like manner the Lord Jesus could say, "All power is given unto Me". Then there is the announcement about the fall of Great Babylon, and what she had become in God's sight.

The reference to Babylon is very striking.

As another has truly said, The Babylon of Revelation is most clearly a reference to O.T. Babylon, but applied to New Testament subjects. Babylon is a Greek form of the Hebrew word Babel.

Invariably the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament is simply Babel, the meaning of which is confusion, and in this sense the word is used symbolically.

The first mention of Babel is found in Gen. 10, in reference to Nimrod, a wilful man who acquired great power over the brute beasts, and who soon began to turn against his fellowmen all the power and craft he had acquired in the animal creation.

He became the first ruler among men, and we are told that the beginning of his kingdom was Babel—in the land of Shinar. In Gen. 11, we find that it was in a plain in this same land of Shinar that men sought to build a city and a tower whose top would reach unto heaven. Some have thought that men thus sought to reach up to the heavens but if this had been their object they surely would have built the tower upon the top of a mountain and not in a plain. But Gen. 11 :4, plainly states their object.

It was to make a name for themselves lest they should be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

We have these things further developed in reference to Babylon under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar.

God had called out, in Israel, a people for Himself, but when they lapsed into idolatry, God allowed them to be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and to be carried away to Babylon with the vessels of the house of God.

It is distinctly said that these were carried into the land of Shinar. Nebuchadnezzar compares in a striking manner to Nimrod, and the city he built to the tower of Babel.

It has been truly said that the Holy Ghost in the New Testament takes up the term Babylon, and applies it to the corruption that was to develop in professing Christendom.

The fall of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was clearly predicted by Daniel, and judgment truly followed. So with this false church, we have first her fall announced and then the details of the judgment which follows.

Babylon has become the habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hated bird, v.2, New Trans.

This has been seen in a marked manner in the church of Rome, particularly at the time of the inquisition. Every devilish form of torture was devised against the true saints of God, whilst the corruption which marked the church at that time was so appalling that it was used of God to bring about the reformation.

The entrance of God's word gave light and understanding to the simple, and thus it was that Rome lost so much of her power. Now, with the giving up of God's word, and the indifference to the claims of God, Rome is again beginning to make her power felt.

How far she may be allowed to go before the true church is taken to be with the Lord, we do not know. Her power over the nations will increase, and the kings of the earth will become intimate with her. The merchants of the earth will seek to enrich themselves through the extensive might of her luxury.

Can we wonder that there is a danger of the people of God becoming ensnared by her?

Many have been loath to sever their association with the church of Rome, sincerely hoping to see some reform in her.

Here the voice from heaven is heard saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye have not fellowship in her sins, and that ye do not receive of her plagues; for her sins have been heaped on one another up to the heaven, and God has remembered her unrighteousness", New Trans., v.4.

This is surely a call to God's people at all times where this evil church has ensnared them. It may also have its application to some after the church has been taken to heaven.

There may be many who would seek the shelter of the church of Rome to avoid the persecutions which would come upon them under the Roman beast, but this will be the surest way to merit the judgment of God. The motive for separation given by God is that His people should not be partakers of her sins.

It is quite true that those who partook of her sins should also be a receiver of her plagues, but escape from judgment should not be the guiding motive for separation. There should be rather an abhorrence of her evil, and of being linked with it. "For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double", v's. 5 and 6.

This is not a call for Christians to execute judgment upon her; chapt. 17 has shown that the ten kings are the appointed instruments for this purpose. It is rather the angel's announcement of the judgment, and principle upon which this judgment will be executed. It is the same principle upon which Babylon of old was judged (read Ps. 137 :8, 9; Jer. 50 :29).

Then in v.7, we have the moral character of Babylon portrayed. She had glorified herself, and lived delicately or deliciously. What a striking contrast to the true disciples of whom the Lord could say, "I am glorified in them", John 17 :10.

Then as to the manner of her life; it could never have been said of her, "For me to live is Christ".

Rather she lived to gratify her own lusts, she lived deliciously. Actually she was in the wilderness (17 :3), but she sought to make a paradise of it.

In her heart, for God reads the heart like a book, she says, "I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow".

This was her proud boast, but God's answer was that her plagues should come in one day, death mourning, and famine, and that she should be utterly burned with fire.

We have already seen it was through the ten kings that this was effected but here we are shown that they were but fulfilling God's purpose in judgment. "For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her", v.8. From verses 9-19, we have the effect of her fall upon three classes of people; the kings of the earth, the merchants and the mariners.

The kings here spoken of have no reference to the ten kings referred to in Chap. 17, for these were not territorial sovereigns but administrative powers which had not received their authority as yet.

These administrative powers have no love for religious systems, but rather hate them as rival authorities.

The kings of the earth, however, that is, earthly sovereigns, have ever sought comfort and strength in associating with religious establishments as being a support to them, hence their mourning when that system is destroyed. They stand afar off, and do not rally to her support for they have no wish to share in her overthrow.

The merchants of the earth also lament over her fall because of the loss of trade.

We have an illustration of this in reference to the healing of the demoniac.

With the loss of their earthly possessions, the Gaderenes besought the Lord Jesus that He might depart out of their coasts. They preferred the presence of the demoniac with all the satanic power it implied rather than suffer the loss of their swine.

So again in Acts 19, we find Demetrius the silversmith gathering his fellow craftsmen to oppose the preaching of Paul because of the danger of loss it would prove to them. It is not that these men have any love for the religion they profess to adhere to, neither would they seek to share in any reproach that may come upon it.

So also with these merchants, with the kings, and later the mariners; they all stand afar off and mourn the downfall of this great religious power, but only as it affects them personally.

This great source of revenue and profit in catering for the embellishment of the Roman church has even been a snare for those who are out to acquire wealth, especially during the dark ages prior to the reformation.

Whether they were dealers in gold, silver or precious stones, painters, sculptors, builders, or engaged in tapestries or embroidery, all found their most profitable patron in the church of Rome.

Verses 12 and 13, give us a long list of the merchandise that Rome traffics in, a list which ends with slaves and souls of men.

We are shown how largely it is dominated by satanic power, so largely used to usurp that which only truly belongs to God.

But with the fall of this great evil, and the mourning upon earth over the blow which has come upon prosperity in general, there is rejoicing in heaven.

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her", v.20.

It should read, "heaven and (ye) saints, and apostles, and prophets; for God hath judged your judgment upon her", New Trans. The heavens would embrace the angelic hosts, while the saints would take in all the redeemed.

I take it that apostles and prophets are mentioned because they have been used of God to lay the foundation of the true church.

"Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone", Eph. 2 :20. Then in v.21, we have the final destruction of this great Babylon set forth.

The figure is doubtless borrowed from Jer. 51, in reference to the destruction of the city of Babylon in that day. Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that was to come upon Babylon, and this was to be read in Babylon, after which a stone was to be bound to the book, and both cast into the midst of Euphrates.

"And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the the evil that I will bring upon her", v.64.

This proves that there will be no rebuilding of the literal city of Babylon, for God declares it shall not rise. But traits that marked the literal city of old are taken up and applied to the spiritual Babylon which will come under like judgment, and also never rise again. Never more would there be the sound of music within her, neither would the craftsman find room in her for his craft.

Even the poorest of the poor that look to her for support, would not find it in her any more, for the millstone, that which was used to grind the daily bread would be heard in her no more. Neither would the light of a candle shine any more in her.

There may have been some at one time who were seeking in some feeble manner to let their light shine but now all was gross darkness.

Verse 24, shows her to be guilty of the blood of the prophets and saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

In the slaying of God's saints she reaches the climax of all the sin that had gone before.

All guilt is headed up in her, and the cup of iniquity is filled by her; therefore God punishes her for all the guilt of the persecutors of all ages, for by her action she has sanctioned the evil work of them all. Never again would the voice of the bridegroom be heard within her for there would be none there who formed part of the true bride.

They will have heard His voice when He bid them rise and come away; they will have been caught up to meet Him in the air, leaving behind all who were unsaved.

In these last two verses we see that corruption had marked this false church and by her sorceries all nations had been deceived.

CHAPTER XIX

In our last chapter we had the sorrows of earth occasioned by the judgment which had fallen upon Babylon. In this chapter we have, in contrast, heaven rejoicing over this same judgment.

"After these things I heard as a loud voice of a great multitude in the heaven, saying, Hallelujah; the salvation, and the glory, and the power of our God; for true and righteous are His judgments", v's. 1, 2, New Trans.

The word here rendered Alleluia, is the Greek form of the Hebrew word Hallelujah—Praise ye Jehovah or Jah, and is uttered four times in the first six verses. In the celebration over the destruction of Babylon as given in the first few verses, we have a class evidently apart from the elders, who are introduced as giving their Amen in v.4.

This great multitude may include the angelic host, but it is more probable that these are referred to in v.5.

The "much people" of the first three verses may have reference to those who have been martyred upon earth after the church has been caught up to heaven; the company who cried "how long"?, Ch. 6, v. 10.

Now the hour has come when they proclaim salvation, glory and honour, and power, unto the Lord their God, Jehovah their Elohim.

The character of His judgments was true and righteous. This had been displayed in the judgment of the great whore, and the avenging of the blood of God's servants at her hand.

In their intense joy they again utter their Alleluia although with it we have the solemn words that follow, "And her smoke rose up for ever and ever".

God is glorified in His saints, and in the praise they offer to Him in heaven, but He is also glorified in the judgment of the wicked in hell.

If the saints in heaven are a witness to God's love and grace, the wicked in hell are a witness to the holiness of God, and the truth of His word.

In v.4, we have mention of the 24 elders for the last time, up to this time they have comprised both the saints of the Old Testament and also of the new, but with the marriage of the Lamb there is a distinction made.

The bride has a unique place, being composed of the New T. saints only, although the others are guests. In this verse the elders and beasts fall down and worship God that sat on the throne, showing perfect accord with all that has been said in the first three verses.

Then in v.5, there is a wider call for praise. "A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great". It may be the Lord's own voice which is here heard, not revealed openly as later in our chapter, but more in angelic form as a servant, for the word is not Praise "your" but "our" God. In v.6 we have in response the voice of a great multitude, and that voice is heard as the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunderings. The ground of their praise is twofold.

With the judgment of Babylon they view the kingdom as being already established, hence they say "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth".

Secondly they celebrate the marriage of the Lamb. The names by which God is worshipped are remarkable as being clearly associated with the earth.

As before mentioned, we have the names of Jehovah Elohim, but with the addition here of "Almighty" or "Shaddai", the name by which He was revealed to the patriarchs of old.

Jehovah means the self existing One, "Who is, and was, and is to come"; the name by which He was revealed to Israel, and by which He was in covenant relationship with them.

Elohim reveals God in His absolute deity as revealed in Gen. 1:1. As Christians we know God in the character of Father. Here in Revelation we have God revealed more in reference to the kingdom which is to be set up and displayed upon the earth. The heavenly host of v.7, would doubtless exclude the church for she does not speak of herself.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready", v.7.

How long and patiently the Lord Jesus had waited for this moment. He had seen that bride as the pearl of great price, and it was in order that He might obtain it for His own possession that He had sold all that He had. Though rich, He had, for our sakes, become poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.

As Rebekah had been sought by Eliezer for Isaac, so the Holy Ghost has sought and brought Christ's bride to know Him; even now is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ.

This is the present position of the church while it remains upon the earth, for the marriage of the Lamb will not take place until He presents her to Himself, a church in glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him".

Yes, God ever has the honour and glory of His Son before Him. So in Matt. 22, where the king makes a marriage feast for his Son, although others are made to participate in it.

Again we read, "The marriage of the Lamb is come", this is the central thought. "And His wife hath made herself ready". The question may well be asked as to how she could make herself ready.

I feel we have the key to this in the following verse. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness (or righteousnesses as it should read) of saints", v.8. This is not the righteousness of Christ, we are made the righteousness of God in Christ even now on earth (see 2 Cor. 5:21).

Again, 1 John 3:7, tells us that every one that doeth righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous.

When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3).

1 Cor. 15, shows that this being changed into His likeness will take place at the coming of Christ for His people. The dead in Christ will be raised in bodies of glory, but we are told that we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

The giving of the fine linen, therefore, has no reference to this righteousness which is found in Him.

To what then can Rev. 19 refer?

I feel it has reference to the judgment seat of Christ at which every one of us will be manifested. There our lives will be reviewed, and all that has been of Christ, and done for Him, will be rewarded.

If Christ has been displayed in our lives, in a world where He has been rejected, Christ also will be seen in the reward which will be given us.

If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him. "And He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God", v.9.

Here we have a company distinct from the bride, for there is no thought of a bride being called as a friend to her marriage feast. Neither can it refer to angels for they are never said to be called.

But there have been other called out ones, and it is these who are here called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. They would embrace Old T. saints, and would also include such as John the Baptist, who distinctly refers to himself as a friend of the bridegroom (see John 3).

Yes, there will be many honoured guests invited to that feast. There will be all the saints of God from A to Z, from Adam and Abel even to Zachariah.

We shall see Abraham with all the patriarchs; David and John the Baptist, and truly blessed will be their portion even though they never form part of the bride. From henceforth that bride, composed of the church, has a unique place and an exalted position which can never be shared with angels or Old T. saints or even by those saints who have been saved after the rapture of the church.

Heb. 12, verses 22 and 23, gives us the distinct companies which form the heavenly hosts

A Jew sets his heart upon the earthly Jerusalem, but here we have the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly city, the city which Abraham looked on to.

The occupants of that sphere are:—

1. The innumerable company of angels, the general assembly.
2. The church of the firstborn which are written in heaven. Then we have God the Judge of all; Abraham referred to Him as the Judge of all the earth (see Gen. 19:25).
3. The spirits of just men made perfect; this has reference to those who have been raised apart from the church of the firstborn. Many would have us shun the wonderful revelations made in this book as being too deep and mystical

for us to understand but here we have a solemn word of warning that these are the true sayings of God.

God knew how many would neglect the reading of this book, hence His words of encouragement to read it, and warnings against refusing or altering it (see Ch. 1, v.3 and Ch. 22, v.'s 7 and 18, 19).

The revelations made to John were of such a character that he would fain fall down and worship the angel that had been used of God to make these things known, but he is at once forbidden to do so.

I am thy fellowservant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

A true servant, whether it be man or angel, seeks no honour for himself, much less divine honour, for this alone belongs to God.

We may seek to reach the sinner, or seek to serve the saint in ministry, but if Christ is not the theme of our subject, our service will be of little or no real profit to our hearers. The scriptures clearly testify of Christ, and the Spirit of God ever delights to take the things of Christ and show them to us, and this is true in a special way in reference to the book we are considering.

It is the revelation or revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. The heavens have now received Him, but it is only until the restitution of all things which God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war", v.11. All that has been before us from Ch. 4 to 19:11, either on earth or in heaven has taken place between the rapture and the revealing in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the fourth occasion that we read of heaven being opened.

1. It was opened upon the Lord Jesus as He walked this earth (Matt. 3:16).

2. John 1, refers to the opened heavens which will mark the millennial scenes of a future day.

3. Stephen sees the heavens opened, revealing the Son of man standing upon the right hand of God (Acts 7).

4. In Rev. 19, the heavens are opened to reveal the Lord Jesus as the mighty warrior, as the man of war, mighty in battle.

We have now reached the end of God's providential dealings, and from v.11 to Ch. 21, v.8, we have a consecutive history, beginning with the appearing of the Lord Jesus and ending with the eternal scenes in the new heaven and the new earth.

In this section, we have, as 2 Tim. 4:1 tells us, the Lord Jesus Christ judging living and dead, at His appearing.

The Jew was fully instructed as to the judgment of the living, but the truth as to the dead was not fully revealed in the Old T. In Luke 16, the Lord Jesus distinctly reveals the judgment which follows death for those who die in their sins.

We have this truth developed in the New Testament. The judgment of the living is shown in two distinct aspects.

There is the warrior judgment, described often as the day of vengeance, and there is the sessional judgment.

In reference to the day of vengeance we have a striking figure in Isa. 63. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength"?

The answer is given at the close of the verse.

"I that speak in righteousness mighty to save".

Again the question is asked, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel", etc. and the answer is given in v.3.

"I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment". "For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come", v.4.

Here we have the winepress judgment which is different from the discrimination of the harvest judgment.

In the latter we have the separating of the wheat from the tares, the wheat being gathered into the garner, and the tares being burned.

In the winepress judgment it is the extermination of the wicked, although

it brings about the deliverance of God's earthly people. The blood sprinkled garments set forth His vengeance in the slaying of His enemies.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war", v.11.

The white horse speaks of triumphal conquest over His enemies. The same symbol is used in Ch. 6, in reference to a great conqueror. Then we have the glorious rider brought before us, presented her as Faithful and True, none other than the Lord Jesus. John speaks of Him as the faithful witness in Rev. 1:5, while in Ch. 3:7. He is spoken of as Holy and true; and in Ch. 3:14, The Faithful and true witness.

He proved Himself the faithful witness when arraigned before Pilate as a prisoner, but although now He is Himself the Judge, He is still remembered as the Faithful and True witness.

He is seen judging and making war, but it is in perfect righteousness. Many in our day make war upon their fellowmen, and seek to rule over them, but it is so often in unrighteousness. At the Lord's first coming we read that "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved", John 3:17.

Now grace reigns through righteousness, but in the coming day, He will, as King, reign in righteousness.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire". With Him there is divine discernment in the judging of evil; nothing escapes His eye. "And on His head were many crowns".

The kingdoms of the world had been offered Him by Satan, who claimed that they had been given to him, and that he had power to bestow them upon whom he would.

Here we are shown that these crowns were worn rightfully by the Lord Jesus.

And He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. This is clearly not the name of Jesus given Him in Phil. 2, before which every knee would bow. This name had been given before His birth. Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins, Matt. 1.

In Rev. 19, it is a name which no man knows, a name which no other could comprehend, expressing what was really true of the Lord in His own nature.

We read "No man knoweth the Son but the Father", Matt. 11. When it is a question of knowing the Father, we have added, "and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him", but these words are not added about the Son.

Of course, in one sense, we know the Lord Jesus as the sent One of the Father, but we cannot fully comprehend the Son, especially regarding the union of manhood with the Deity.

"And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God".

Here it is not a question of the blood of atonement, but of vengeance; trampling His enemies beneath His feet. The word of God is a well known title by which He has revealed God in grace and truth to us as Father, In Rev. 19, however, it is not the revealing of God in grace, but in holiness, as executing judgment against evil.

Here in this chapter we have four names used in reference to Christ. (1) The Faithful and True, v.11; (2) The name which can only be known to Himself, v.12; (3) The Word of God, the revealer of God in holiness against evil, v.13; (4) King of kings, and Lord of lords, v.16.

In the first three He stands alone, but in the last we are linked with Him. "And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean", v.14.

Other scriptures show that angels will be present at the coming of the Lord as executors of judgment, but the armies here refer to the saints of God. The fine linen, white and clean, is that with which the bride is clothed, the righteousnesses of saints.

Here we find them upon white horses, following in the train of the Lord Jesus. It is not said that their garments are dipped in blood. They share in the triumphs of the Lord, but the judgment of Idumea was not their part, although they share in the victory over the beast.

Again it is said, "And out of His mouth (not of the saints) goeth a sharp

sword, that with it He should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God", v. 15.

The Lord Jesus has only to speak the word, and judgment instantly follows. Ruling with a rod of iron expresses the absolute and inflexible character of His government. We doubtless have an allusion to Ps. 2, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel".

The word of His grace is now being proclaimed for salvation, but in that day it will be the word that deals righteously in judgment with evil. The treading of the winepress speaks of unsparing judgment which will come upon all who oppose Him, and His enemies will be made the footstool of His feet. "And He hath on His vesture (or garment) and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords".

It is in this character that the Lord Jesus will be revealed in the coming day of power. The name being written upon His thigh, the place upon which the sword is girded, may suggest how He will make good that title by the power of judgment. Then, prior to the execution of judgment, there is heaven's announcement as to what was about to take place.

The angel stands in the sun, the place of supreme authority and cries with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God".

There was a time when God gave an invitation to come to the supper of grace, but the majority despised that invitation and refused to gather themselves to it.

In that day however there will be no escape for those who despise God's grace. We read in Matt. 24:27, 28, in reference to the coming of the Lord to take vengeance, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together". The figure is taken from an eastern battlefield where the vultures have gathered to feed upon the carcasses of the slain.

We are told in Rev. 19:18, who will be slain—kings, captains, mighty men, horses and riders, with all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against his army".

We have already seen how the flower of Europe's armies, both in men and arms, will be gathered to the land of Palestine.

Ostensibly they have been gathered in huge numbers to check the invasion of the vast hordes of the North Eastern powers who are seeking to over-run the land.

The antichrist, the king of the Jews, will make a covenant with the Roman Empire to protect Palestine from the threatened invasion; but it will be in vain, for we are plainly told that the covenant will not stand, for the desolater will sweep through the land like a flood. In our chapter we are shown that Satan's real object, through the beast and the false prophet, is to make war with the Lamb. There will thus be two vast opposing powers in Palestine at this time, the great Northern power with their Eastern confederates, and the western powers.

It is the latter army which is more before us in this chapter, and with whom the Lord Jesus will deal personally.

The Assyrian or northern power will not be finally dealt with until the Lord has established His throne at Jerusalem.

In the first attack upon Jerusalem by the Assyrian there is a taking of half of the city, but in its second attack they will find that the Lord is there, and that He will fight with His people, who will be enabled to obtain complete victory over their enemies.

With the Roman Emperor and the false prophet, the Lord deals personally; and these two Satan-controlled leaders are taken and cast into the lake of fire alive. It is solemn to contemplate the awful doom of these two men.

We are told elsewhere that the lake of fire has been prepared, not for man, but for the devil and his angels, but here we are shown that the first to enter that fearful place are these two men, who have given themselves over to Satan to oppose every claim of the Lord Jesus.

The judgment of these two men is clearly final, for in being cast into the

lake of fire they are eternally separated from God. The slaying of the remnant with the sword is not a final judgment.

They will be found among the dead, small and great, who will be raised to stand before the great white throne as shown in chapter 20.

In the meanwhile we are shown how clearly God's word was verified.

There had been the call to the fowls to gather themselves to this great supper of God, and here we see this supper of judgment taking place, the fowls being filled with their flesh.

The truth of God's word will be verified whether it be in reference to the blessing now promised to those who believe in Christ, or in reference to those who refuse Him as a Saviour and have therefore to do with Him as a Judge.

CHAPTER XX

In the previous chapter we had the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, two men who had been controlled by the direct power of Satan.

The first, as we have seen, was the revived head of the Roman Empire. To view the position of Italy at the present moment one would hardly credit that a Roman could rise to such power as to be the controlling force of the kingdoms of Europe, but we have to remember the power by which this is brought about.

In the first place, man had been placed in a position by God to rule creation, but by reason of sin he had become the slave of Satan, who had been allowed of God to usurp the place of rule so that he is spoken of as being the god of this world, that is, religiously: he is also its prince, politically.

When the Lord Jesus was tempted of Satan, He was offered all the kingdoms of the world if only He would fall down and worship Satan.

With what devilish wisdom the beast rises to power we can hardly conceive, but we know he will be an object of wonder to the world. Likewise the antichrist, the king of the Jews, who will rule in Palestine in conjunction with the first beast, will have satanic power, by which he will deceive the mass of the Jewish nation, and claim to be their Messiah.

As we have said, these two men, in their wilful rebellion, will be dealt with at the coming of Christ, their judgment will be final. When we come to the present chapter we have the great author of evil dealt with.

It is not said to be the personal act of Christ to deal with Satan in these first three verses, but that of an angel who comes down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, or abyss, and a great chain in his hand. These may be figures of speech, but the sense to be conveyed is quite plain.

The key is for opening and shutting, while the chain is for binding him fast as a slave.

It is quite clear that Satan and his angels have never yet been bound or deprived of their liberty.

We find him entering the garden of Eden in the earliest chapters of Genises and deceiving man into sin against God. We find him again as the accuser of Job before God. We also have him tempting David to number the people.

We have Satan and his angels constantly referred to in the gospels while Peter speaks of him as a roaring lion going about, and seeking whom he may devour.

There were those who craved that the Lord would not send them into the abyss before the time, the place and time referred to in Rev. 20:1-3.

It is true there have been angels who have been dealt with in this way, and who have been deprived of their liberty: I refer to those who have been delivered to chains of darkness to be reserved for judgment (2 Peter 2:4).

Jude 5 tells us that they kept not their first estate for (God had ordained that angels should neither marry or be given in marriage) but left their own habitation. These are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness reserved for the judgment of the great day.

Peter and Jude both refer to God's restraining power upon angels that sinned just prior to the flood, and who have been deprived of their liberty so that there should be no further abuse of it.

Satan, however, and his angels, have not yet been bound, but are allowed

a certain amount of liberty under God, Who often uses them to afflict the sons of men because of their sin, so that they might turn in true repentance to God for salvation and deliverance. The casting of Satan into the bottomless pit will doubtless include those angels who have been at liberty with him.

In v.2, we have a full description of this awful being. In having power to oppress he is spoken of as a dragon. He is also spoken of as the old or ancient serpent. He was the seducer of Eve, and has been the seducer of Adam's race ever since.

Satan is his personal name, and as such he is referred to elsewhere as the god of this world, also its prince.

For a matter of about six thousand years he has been the avowed enemy of God and man, but now he is taken and bound a thousand years, during which Christ will reign over the earth.

What this will be for the world it is hard to conceive. Evil may still be in the hearts of men, but there will be no tempting of men on the part of Satan.

Thus if a man sins in open rebellion against the rule of Christ he is no longer treated as a deceived creature, but as being wilful, and as such he comes under the swift judgment of God.

On the whole men will submit to a power they feel they dare not oppose, but with many there will be no real change of heart, hence the need of being again put to the test at the end of the thousand years. It is for this reason that Satan must be loosed a little season. "And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them and judgment was given to them; and the souls of those beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus, and on account of the word of God; and those who had not done homage to the beast nor to his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years", v.4, New Trans. We read of these thrones in Dan. 7:9.

"And I beheld till thrones were set, and the Ancient of days did sit", New Trans.

Here we are not told who are seated upon these thrones apart from the Ancient of days, neither are we told who they are that Rev. 20 refers to, but other scriptures leave us in no doubt.

1 Cor. 6:2, tells us that the saints shall judge the world.

Rev. 3:21, tells us that the saint who overcomes will be made to sit with Christ on His throne even as He overcame and sat down with His Father in His throne.

Two other classes are mentioned in this verse. There are the souls of those who have been beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus, and the word of God (Rev. 6:9).

In the main they refer to those who will be slain during the first half of the week.

Their cry is, "how long" before their blood is avenged upon them that dwell upon the earth, and they are told that they should rest a little while their fellow bondmen and brethren who were avout to be killed as they should be fulfilled.

This class is referred to in Rev. 13:15, the killed who will not do homage to the beast or his image. It may have seemed that they had suffered in vain, whether they had borne testimony in an active way, or in a passive way by not yielding to the claims of the beast. But here we are shown that if they had lost their earthly place in the kingdom here, they would receive a heavenly portion with Christ above, to live and reign with Him a thousand years. They form part in the first resurrection equally as much as the raptured do.

It has been thought by some that these may have been caught up without dying as the saints at the time of the rapture, but I feel that the context of our scripture together with those referred to in the previous chapters, leaves no doubt as to their being raised from the dead.

Here it says that they **lived**, surely in contrast to their having died. In reference to Christians it is distinctly said elsewhere that if we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with Him. This will also be true of those who suffer martyrdom after the church has been caught up to heaven; they form part of the first resurrection.

They were made subject to the first death (although not as a judgment from God) but the second death will have no power over them whatever.

In common with all heavenly saints they are made priests of God and of

Christ, and reign with Him a thousand years. The rest of the dead, those who have not died in faith as those who had been martyred, live not again until after the thousand years.

Thus there is at least a thousand years between the first and second resurrections; between the resurrection of the just from among the dead, and the resurrection of the wicked dead, who have been left in their graves at the time of the first resurrection.

All who are raised prior to the millennium form part of the first resurrection, and are spoken of as blessed and holy. Those who are raised after the reign of Christ will be raised for judgment.

So also it will be in reference to the two judgments of the wicked, the judgment of the living, and of the dead. Living persons only will be judged prior to the setting up of the kingdom, but only the dead afterwards. The reign of Christ had been largely the subject of prophecy in the Old Testament, but the time of the duration of that reign is given in this chapter for the first time. The saints were brought before us in Ch. 19, as forming part of the armies of heaven who clad in white, pure, fine linen, follow Christ upon white horses.

They are with the Lord when He comes in power and glory; they are also seated upon thrones when He sits upon the throne of His glory; and they reign with Him during the thousand years.

The martyred saints of the tribulation period are also raised immediately prior to the reign of Christ, so that if, as we have already said, they had no place in the earthly kingdom, they would receive a heavenly portion, and reign with Christ over the earth. As to the details connected with that reign we have to turn elsewhere, especially to the Psalms, and Old Testament prophets.

Here we have a brief reference to the reign of Christ, and then we are carried on to the end of that reign.

At the end of the thousand years Satan is loosed from his prison, and goes out to deceive the nations which are on the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, together to the war, whose number is as the sand of the sea (See New Trans).

While grace reigned through righteousness, men as a whole, were not converted to God, nor will they be when Christ as King reigns in righteousness. They will submit to a power they dare not oppose, but with many it will be but a feigned obedience.

Sin will be kept in check, but it will still remain in the hearts of men.

We might, if not shown otherwise, judge that in that day of glory and just rule, men's hearts would be changed. Of course there will be some who will turn to the Lord, and whose stony hearts will be changed.

These will have God's laws written upon their hearts so that they will delight in them and seek to walk in obedience.

God would be perfectly just in committing the others to judgment, but He ever seeks to vindicate His justice in all that He does, hence He allows men again to be tempted of Satan, only to prove how readily they succumb to him in rebellion against God and His Christ. It is no longer a third part of the earth where Rome had previously held sway, it is now universal, for it is the nations which are on the four corners of the earth. The words Gog and Magog must not be confounded with Gog, the land of Magog spoken of in Ezek. 38. There it refers to an individual person, the prince of Rosh (as it should read) and who is the ruler of the land of Magog.

In Ezekiel we have reference to a great northern confederacy, doubtless led by Russia, who invades the land immediately after the setting up of Christ's kingdom. I refer to their final assault upon the land of Palestine. They are the desolators of that land, and the inveterate enemies of the Jews, and from other scriptures we learn that the Lord will give the Jews the power to fight, teaching their fingers to war, and giving His people the power to obtain a crushing victory over their enemies. So great will be the slaughter that many months will be needed to clear the land of the dead bodies.

In Rev. 20, however, we have a similar power to that which had been destroyed at the beginning of the millennium, but which now embraces a world wide gathering after the reign of Christ. Doubtless the population of the world will have greatly increased, and those gathered are likened to the sand of the sea for multitude. Jerusalem, the beloved city, is the central point of attack, especially the camp of the saints whom they seek to exterminate. During the millennium

Satan had been bound, and the Lord Jesus reigned supreme in power.

At the end of the thousand years the kingdom is given up by Christ to God, and Satan is again loosed, but how swiftly God deals with the evil.

It is the last time that Satan is allowed to tempt man or oppose God, and it is the last time man is tempted on earth. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. I have often thought of Gen. 19, as a striking picture of what we have here.

Lot, the just and righteous man, is besieged, and all join in seeking to destroy him.

It is then that God smote the besiegers with blindness, but this only tended to madden them to frenzy in their effort to reach Lot.

We know how God delivered Lot and his daughters, after which fire came down from heaven and burnt up the cities and their inhabitants. So in like manner God will deliver the godly out of temptation and deal with the ungodly in judgment.

The fire which comes down from heaven is doubtless that which Peter refers to in II Peter 3:10, the earth being burnt up with its wicked works.

There will thus be no living wicked to be judged after this.

Then, and not till then, have we the final doom of Satan recorded.

As the great deceiver of mankind, he is taken, and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are both the beast and false prophet. "And they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of ages", v.10, New Trans.

After a thousand years they are still there when they are joined by their satanic leader, and we further have God's solemn word "and they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of ages, terms which indicate a never ending eternity." It is a solemn thought that while the lake of fire has been prepared for the Devil and his angels, yet that it is two of the sons of men who are first made to enter there. They have been wilful in their opposition to Christ and His people, and now they have their just reward.

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heavens fled, and place was not found for them", New Trans. v.11.

In v.4, in reference to the judgment of the living, we had thrones, and they that sat upon them.

Here the saints of God are associated with the Lord Jesus when He reigns over the earth.

Now in our chapter we have a throne in the singular, with One seated upon it.

The judgment is according to the purity of God's nature. As to who it is that is seated upon that throne we can have no doubt.

John 5 tells us that all judgment is committed to the Son. He is the Judge both of the living, and of the dead. We have already had the judgment of the living, now we come to the judgment of the dead.

The earth and heaven have passed away: 2 Peter 3, tells us it is by fire, even as in v.9 of our present chapter. Time, as connected with earth, has ceased to exist, and eternity has begun.

As to those who are to be brought before that judgment throne we are plainly told in v.12.

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is that of life.

And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works", v.12, New Trans.

This is no earthly judgment, neither have we nations as in Matt. 25, but we have the dead, living again after the thousand years reign referred to in v.5.

Here we have the resurrection unto judgment as referred to in John 5:29.

It is a vast throng, embracing as it does all the wicked from Cain onward. Many have lived wicked lives, and apparently have never received the judgment their deeds have merited, but there is no escaping God's tribunal.

There may be differences, some being termed great, others small, but all are made to stand before the throne.

Needless to say, the soul is again united to the body as had those who formed part of the first resurrection, but with what a difference!

The believer may be called upon to die, and his body be sown in corruption, but it will be raised in incorruption.

It may be sown in dishonour, but it will be raised in glory

It may be sown in weakness, but it will be raised in power.

It is a natural body which is sown, but it is raised a spiritual body.

But, says the apostle, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

As believers we shall be raised, and changed into the likeness of Christ, and never come into judgment.

On the other hand, the unbeliever who has died in his sins will be raised in them, and have to give an account for all he has said and done, even to an idle word.

Thus the dead are judged out of the things written in the book according to their works.

None will be able to escape, for even the sea is made to give up the dead which it has held in its embrace for so long.

Death and Hades are also made to give up the dead which are in them.

Death separates the soul from the body, the body going down into the grave, while the soul goes into Hades, the place of departed spirits; but with the resurrection the soul is reunited with the body. Death and Hades end at the great white throne, for the first death is destroyed by all being raised.

This brings in the second death, the lake of fire.

“And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire”, v.15, New Trans.

The first death is separation of the soul from the body, but the second death is separation of body and soul from God. What an end is thus brought before us.

It is not annihilation, for this would have been but a revival of the first death, whereas here we learn that the first death ends with the lake of fire, and that the casting of men into the lake of fire begins the second death.

We can thank God that when believers are manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, and their lives are reviewed, they will be there in the likeness of Christ, in bodies of glory. Old things will have passed away, and all things will be new and of God.

The believers' name will have been recorded in the book of life because he had believed the record which God had given of His Son.

If it were merely a question of his own works, he too would have been damned for ever, but he is saved through the finished work of Christ.

But with the unbeliever, how different.

The records all prove his guilt, and it is also proved that he never availed himself of God's sovereign grace and mercy. If he had, his name would have been written in the book of life.

How God seeks to justify His righteous action even in reference to the judgment of the wicked.

The book of life is opened and searched, but alas, none who stand before the great white throne have their names written there, and it is this which decides their doom.

There had been a day of mercy when it had been freely proclaimed “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

But here in Rev. 20, the day of grace had passed, and we read “Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire,” v.15.

Many may say, it is too awful to contemplate, and the devil would say, it cannot be true, but God's word is too plain to mistake its meaning, hence we would say, “Let God be true and every man a liar.”

CHAPTER XXI

It has been said that the first eight verses of our chapter would better have been joined to the previous chapter, as continuing what had there transpired.

Rev. 21: 9-27, is connected with 22:1-5, and there is a reviewing again of the millennial scene of glory.

We have a similar thing in the earlier part of this book in reference to Babylon.

First we have her judgment recorded, then afterwards there is a reviewing of her evil as showing God's justice in bringing such destruction upon her.

The eternal blessing of the saint is set forth in Rev. 21:1-8, and is in striking contrast to the judgment of the wicked as set forth in the end of our last chapter.

Both follow the millennial reign of Christ, and the passing away of the heaven and earth in their present form.

Evil is eternally dealt with by God before we read of a new heaven and a new earth as here set forth.

Truly Isaiah had spoken of new heavens and a new earth, but this is clearly in a moral sense, and not what is set forth in the eternal state as shown in Rev. 21.

The heavens will be cleansed from Satan's defiling influences, and the earth also will, in large measure, be freed from the effects of the curse.

This deliverance from the bondage of corruption will be shared by all creation as Rom. 8:18-22, clearly shows, but this again has no reference to the eternal state.

Isaiah 65, shows that Jerusalem is the centre of earthly glory for it is clearly an earthly scene.

We have infants and old men referred to, also we are shown that for one to die an hundred years old will be to die as an infant, but for such an one to die thus will be the result of being accursed of God.

The last part of that chapter shows clearly that it has reference to the peaceful reign of Christ.

In reference to that reign we read in Isaiah 32:1, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness," but when Peter speaks of the christians hope he says, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Righteousness will reign during the Millennium, but in the eternal state it will dwell.

Now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, (see Rom. 5:21).

With the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth we are told that the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. This does not imply annihilation as we understand the word, but as Heb. 1:11, 12, so aptly puts it.

"They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed."

Peter shows that the present heavens and earth are reserved unto fire, the earth and its works will be burnt up, thus being purified with fire, and every trace of evil will vanish.

Doubtless the new heaven and the new earth will be made, or formed, out of the old, even as the resurrection body of glory will be formed out of the present body of humiliation. In reference to the eternal state it is distinctly said that there was no more sea.

In Isaiah 60, however, it is said "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God," v.9.

Isles and ships clearly suppose a sea.

Seas form barriers for mankind, but in the eternal state there will be no barriers, but the closest intercourse one with another.

The sea has often been used as a symbol to set forth the nations in their unsettled state, but in that eternal day there will be ordered subjection to God with nothing to mar or bring discord.

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

It is spoken of as the holy city because all there is in accordance with the nature of God.

Also it is the new Jerusalem, not the old Jerusalem as associated with God's

earthly people, the Jewish nation, but which is above, which is our mother, as Gal. 4:26, puts it.

There are three things spoken of in connection with this holy city: (1) Her origin is from God; (2) She comes out of heaven; (3) She is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

We read in Rev. 19:7, how she had made herself ready, and how the marriage of the Lamb had come.

That church had been loved of the Lord, and He had given Himself for it. He had sanctified and cleansed it with the washing of water by the word, and then, in that heavenly glory, He would present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

That church will have lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Now in the eternal state she is still seen in all the freshness and beauty of youth as at the beginning.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God,” v.3.

Doubtless the new Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God, it is where He abides.

Eph. 2:22, shows that we who form the church, are even now builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

But if the heavenly saints compose the tabernacle of God, there are others who are found in the blessing of the new earth who are simply described as men.

These may include all 'he saved from Adam to the coming of Christ, and also those who are saved after the rapture of the church. Many of these will have formed part of the first resurrection, but many will doubtless have been translated to the glory without dying, for there is nothing to suggest that the saints of the millennium see death.

Doubtless, as Lot and his family were taken out of Sodom before the fire of judgment fell, so with the earthly saints prior to the fire coming down from heaven by which the earth and its works will be burnt up.

I have often thought of the fear and grief which would come to the people of God after they had enjoyed peace for so long under the reign of Christ, to find at the close of the thousand years, that the kingdom is given up, and Satan is loosed upon the earth; to see the nations again being gathered to make war upon the saints at Jerusalem.

We see the answer to all this in Rev. 21.

God will dwell with them, not on a passing visit as in Eden of old; God will also own them as His people, He will be with them, and be their God.

What this will be for His people passes our comprehension, but we are shown in the following verse how God will comfort and assure His people.

As the God of all comfort, He wipes away all tears from their eyes.

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Death is for ever put away, while sorrow, crying and pain, are now things of the past, for the former things are passed away.

These things were all linked with a groaning creation, but now we have a new creation where all is of God alone. Hence in v.5 we read “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new, And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful,” v.5.

It is doubtless God Himself who here speaks, for it is He who sits upon the throne, and not the Lord Jesus personally.

The throne upon which Christ will sit is connected with the kingdom, but this will be delivered up to God at the close of the millennial reign of Christ that God may be all in all.

That the Lord Jesus is also the Alpha and Omega is made abundantly clear in Rev. 22:13, for He also is divine.

The expression “It is done” is followed by the declaration as to God being the beginning and the end.

Only such a God could have foretold things from the beginning so clearly, and only He could have brought about their accomplishment. Even now God will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Needless perhaps to say, there will be no thirsting in the eternal state, neither will there be any overcoming in that bright scene of glory.

These things relate to earth, and we have a similar invitation being given by the Lord Jesus in John 7:37.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Again in Rev. 22:17, "Let him that is athirst come, And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

As to the overcomer we also have several references. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," 1 John 5:4.

There are also promises made to the overcomer found in each of the seven churches as shown in Rev. 2 and 3.

We also read of overcomers in Rev. 12:11, "They overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony."

These then are the principles by which any and all overcome, "faith, the blood, and the word of God."

Here in Rev. 21:7, there is the promise that the overcomer should inherit all things; that God would be his God, and that he would be owned as God's son.

Such then are the blessings bestowed upon all the redeemed by a God of love, but He is also a God of light and holiness.

God can only show grace to those who are willing to come and partake of His grace.

There are many who will not come, but who prefer to continue in their sins.

If such think that God will overlook their sin and rebellion, God would here seek to give a word of warning. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

It is a fearful list, and it is headed by the fearful, those who have been convicted but who have been afraid to confess Christ. Then there is the unbeliever; one may not be marked by the outstanding sins that follow, but unless he sets to his seal that God is true he will never gain heaven, or escape the lake of fire.

All who die in their sins will have their part in the lake of fire.

Man cannot avoid God's appointment in reference to the first death, neither will he be able to escape the second death, when body and soul, he has his portion in the lake of fire, in eternal separation from God.

God is not mocked, and what a man sows, that shall he also reap.

Then, from verse 9 of our chapter, after everything has been traced to its final end, whether in reference to the redeemed, or to the wicked, the Spirit of God begins a new section, in which we have a review of the glories of the bride, the Lamb's wife, in relationship to the earth, during the thousand years reign of Christ

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," v.9.

It seems to be the same angel who had shown John the judgment of Babylon, the great whore, in Rev. 17.

John, at that time, was carried into the wilderness, a place of moral drought and desolation, to see this woman who had assumed to be the true bride of Christ but who was proved to be the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

Now he is carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, from which elevated position he is shown that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven, from God. Here it is the bride of the Lamb and not of the king as in the Old Testament.

The Lord Jesus is spoken of as being King of the Jews also of nations, but is never said to be the Christian's king. The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife, and as such she will reign with Him, and not be reigned over by Him.

As Moses was taken up to Mount Pisgah, from which he was shown the land of promise, so with John here.

He is not taken to the wilderness to look down as he did upon Babylon, but he is carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and he looks up, and sees that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

It is an heavenly city in contrast to the earthly city, and it has its origin in God, while God's glory is seen displayed in her.

In our day, the Christian is enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God: here in Rev. 21, she is manifested in the midst of that glory.

Of course this is not the light and glory spoken of in Timothy as that which cannot be seen or entered into by the creature, but this is a glory which can be both seen and shared.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them,” John 17:22.

“Her light was like unto a stone most precious; even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal,” v.11.

In Ch. 4, v.3, jasper was used as a symbol of divine glory. Here in Ch. 21, the church is clothed with God’s glory.

The wall great and high was also said to be of jasper. Whether it gives the thought of protection, or the excluding of all evil, God’s glory meets both.

There are twelve gates with twelve angels at them, and names written thereon which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

The number twelve speaks of perfection in connection with earthly government.

The heavenly city comes down from heaven, but it does not come down to the earth. It will be seen suspended in the heavens, and the nations will walk in the light of it.

John 1:51, tells us of the opened heavens, and of the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Doubtless there will be the closest intercourse between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem, angels being used as intermediaries, and the twelve tribes being the special objects of their ministry.

There were gates on every side even as there were tribes on every side in the tabernacle of old.

When we come to the foundations of the wall of the city we have no longer the twelve tribes of Israel, but the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

How we are reminded of Ephesians 2:19, 20.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.”

As another has truly said, This cannot refer to the Old Testament prophets, for then they would have been mentioned first, and not last, but it has reference to the apostles of the Lord Jesus, and those chosen of Him to give us the written word of the New Testament.

By their word and doctrine they have laid the foundation upon which the church is built, the foundation being laid in Christ and His work.

Here it is the assembly as founded at Jerusalem under the twelve apostles.

It forms the organized seat of heavenly power, the new and heavenly capital of God’s government.

The golden reed by which the city, gates, and wall were measured sets forth the perfect righteousness of God by which everything is measured and judged.

The result of God’s work is thus shown to be perfect.

The thought of measuring suggests that God owns and claims that city as being suited to Himself.

The city in itself is perfect, and has no unequal lengths.

It is foursquare, and we may assume without question, that it exceeds in glory and magnificence all that had preceded it.

Still the number twelve is brought into prominence, speaking to us of the perfection of administrative government, originating from and through it.

Being 1,500 miles long, and of equal width and height gives the impression of a very large city. The fact of its being of equal height may suggest its heavenly character.

All earthly cities are measured by length and breadth, but the heavenly city is seen in the form of a cube.

Doubtless the language is used in a symbolical sense but it is certainly very expressive.

When we come to the walls, these are said to be one hundred and forty four cubits: 12×12 .

It sets forth perfection in reference to earthly government yet at the same time we find God’s glory displayed in the building of the wall; it was of jasper, that which sets forth the glory of God.

The city was thus surrounded with and guarded by divine glory.

The city itself was of pure gold, like unto clear glass.

Gold is used as a figure of divine righteousness, the righteousness which can endure God's searching judgment.

Clear glass would convey the thought that it was no longer water of purification as in the laver of old, but holiness, fixed and without a flaw.

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones," v.19.

In these stones we see the reflection of God's glory in all its varied hues and aspects.

As another has said, The precious stones, or varied displays of God's nature, who is light, in connection with the creature (seen in creation, Ezek. 28; in grace, in the high priest's breastplate) now shone in permanent glory, and adorned the foundations of the city."

Morally they exhibit therefore the history of souls—as creatures, then as subjects of grace, taken up and put upon the heart of Christ, and finally as seen in all His varied beauties in the glory.

As to the various stones displayed it has been said that the following, forms a description so far as is known:—

(1) Jasper—Most beautiful, and differing in colour; (2) Sapphire—blue; (3) Chalcedony—Grey, with purple, blue and yellow; (4) Emerald—Green; (5) Sardonyx—A mixture of Sardius and Onyx; (6) Sardius—A blood red; (7) Chrysolite—Gold stone; (8) Beryl—Transparent, sea green; (9) Topaz—Golden; (10) Chrysoprasus—Bluish hue, beautiful green with yellow mixture; (11) Jacinth—Violet; (12) Amethyst—Purple.

The first stone is the Jasper, and the sixth is the Sardius, the only blood red stone.

This last stone formed the first stone in the breastplate of the high priest of old.

They speak pre-eminently to us of the glories of God in creation and in redemption; seen in an especial way in the Lord Jesus in reference to His claims over the earth (Read Rev. 4 and 5).

God's wisdom and knowledge is seen displayed in the church even now (see Eph. 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12), and angels learn as they see God's purposes being unfolded; but here in Rev. 21, there is the open display of God's wisdom and glory, seen in and through the church.

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass," v.21.

This was the pearl as seen by the Lord Jesus, the pearl of great price, the church.

In love to that church, and in order that she may be displayed in all her beauty, He set aside all that He had, giving up even His rights as Messiah for a time, and finally laying down His life to redeem the object of His love to Himself.

Now that pearl is seen to perfection at every gate, manifested in the beauty and glory of Christ Himself. The street of the city was pure gold.

It speaks of divine righteousness, that which was suited to the nature of God, neither was there anything which would hinder the shining forth of that glory; all was as transparent glass, there is nothing that defiles.

Neither have we different streets to walk, but only one. Christ Himself is the object of each and all; they follow Him.

"And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

God's presence and that of the Lamb fills that city.

Neither was there anything that would suggest distance between God and His saints.

In reference to the temple of old, God dwelt between the cherubim, and thus was hidden from the people whose place was outside.

Here the saints of God are found in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb.

The names of God given here are those by which He was revealed in the Old Testament, Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, and have to do with an earthly people.

They are used here because the heavenly city is viewed in its association with earth and earthly government.

We have no mention of the name of Father or of the Father's house, nor do we have here the close ties of communion as we have revealed in the epistles.

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof,” v.23.

There is no need of created light in the presence of the Creator, the God who is Himself said to be light.

Here that glory and light is reflected in and through the Lamb. He Himself is the lamp of light of that city, although according to John 17, the glory which the Father gives to Him is a glory which He shares with us (see v. 22).

“And the nations shall walk by its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory to it.

And its gates shall not be shut at all by day, for night shall not be there,” v. 24, 25, New Trans.

It is the nations which have been spared from judgment that now walk in the light of that heavenly city.

Suspended in the firmament of heaven it will manifest the light of its glory like the sun that shines in the heavens.

The world will then be made to realize how much God has loved the saints who have believed that Christ was the sent One of God, by the glory which God has given them.

“And kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it” (or, as it should be read, “unto it”), v.24.

Actually they bring them to the earthly city of Jerusalem, but it is in the sight of the heavenly city, and for the acceptance of Him who rules from that heavenly city on high.

“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there,” v.25.

In the days of Nehemiah, the gates of Jerusalem were commanded to be shut at the close of each day so that no enemy could possibly enter the city during the dark hours of the night.

There is no danger of an enemy, or anything that would defile ever entering the heavenly Jerusalem.

“And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into (or unto) it.” Both rulers and peoples will be of one mind in the rendering of homage, for all will recognise that the heavens rule, and that through the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life,” v.27.

We have thus both the negative and the positive side.

On the one hand, evil in every form is excluded, but none are excluded whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

It is essentially the Lamb’s book of life.

How it reminds us of God’s Lamb who came to take away sin. Thank God He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and now all who believe in Christ as being the sent One of God, and who trust in the finished work of Calvary, can know with assurance that their names are written in heaven, in the Lamb’s book.

It is this which gives them a title to be found in that glory.

CHAPTER XXII

In this last chapter we have the heavenly city presented to us, both in relation to those who dwell therein, and to the nations of the millennial earth.

The symbols used carry our minds back to the first book of the bible, but there are striking differences.

There we had a river going out of Eden, but which was parted into four heads, from whence flowed four rivers.

We may trace in them the ways of men, but see, too, how the grace of God followed them.

The first may remind us of the way of the Gentiles, who have ever sought earthly glory rather than God, but God does not give them up, but ever seeks to bring them back to Himself.

We have a striking instance of this in the case of Cornelius (see Acts 10).

The second river flowed towards Ethiopia, and reminds us of the curse which fell upon Ham because of his corrupt act, but even here God's grace goes after them as illustrated in Acts 8, in reference to the blessing of the eunuch.

The third and fourth rivers remind us of the captivities of both Israel and Judah, the first to Assyria, and the other to Babylon, but God's grace still flows like a river. He does not give them up, but brings blessing to each in His own time and way.

Here in Rev. 22, there is but one river, which also seems to have its counterpart in the earthly Jerusalem during the Millennium.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," Ps. 46:4.

Ezekiel also speaks of waters which issued from under the threshold of the house eastward, and which afterwards becomes a great river, bringing life and healing wherever it comes (Read Ezek. 47:1-9).

In Rev. 22, it truly will be a river of water of life, in a far higher way.

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

It is striking, in John's writings, to see how closely God and the Lamb are linked together.

We have a similar thing in his epistles, where God and Christ are so linked together as to be at times indistinguishable.

We may wonder how the water of life can flow so freely from God's throne, but when we remember it is linked with the Lamb we are reminded of His advent into this world as the Lamb of God to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations," v.2.

There is only one street, even as there is but one river, but in the midst of the street and on either side of the river, is the tree of life.

Christ forms the object of walk for all who follow the Lamb.

The tree of life clearly has reference to Christ Himself.

When it refers to the walk of the saints it means that feeding on Christ alone gives blessing, fruitfulness and power in their lives.

Christ as enjoyed by our own souls, is the Christ that through grace, we shall be able to minister to others.

Here we have no tree of the knowledge of good and evil as in Eden, no responsibility as there, but perfect grace and fulness of blessing.

There, man ate of the tree of knowledge and fell, neither was he allowed to eat of the tree of life until all responsibility had been met by Christ upon the cross, and the way opened again to the tree of life.

In that scene of heavenly glory there are the twelve fruits, for the tree yielded her fruit every month, and these fruits the heavenly saints feed upon.

A similar feature will also mark the earthly city.

"And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine," Ezek. 47:12.

The fruits of the heavenly city of life are twelve, gathered month by month by the saints, and forming true food for the soul.

The number twelve would show that it had reference to the earth and God's earthly people.

The secret of the Lord is with those that fear Him, and so it is here in reference to the heavenly saints as to God's purposes in respect of Christ and His claims upon the earth.

1 Cor. 6:2, shows that the world will be judged by the saints, and they can only do this intelligently as they have the mind of Christ.

But not only do these things form precious food for the saints above, but in some way or other they are able to minister Christ to God's earthly people, and also to the nations, hence we read that the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

This in itself is a striking proof that we have here no reference to the eternal state.

In the eternal state we do not read of nations, neither is there any need of healing.

But in the millennial scene it will be different.

There will be the nations who have been spared from God's judgments.

They have passed through times of great suffering, and stand in need of healing, like the man who fell among the thieves when sought and found by the good Samaritan.

He was brought to the inn, but he still needed to be cared for.

So in that future day the heavenly city sustains a close relationship with the earth, and imparts the healing virtues of the tree of life to the nations below.

Verses 3-5 go together, and show the blessedness of those found in the heavenly city. "There shall be no more curse."

This has distinct reference to the heavenly city, and could not be said of the earth where sin still remains, although kept in check until the millennial reign has ended.

Then we have the reason why there should be no more curse; it is because the throne of God and of the Lamb are in it.

As in John's writings, the Father and Son are shown to be one, so here in reference to God and the Lamb.

They are so one in the mind of John that he does not pause to distinguish, but simply says, His servants shall serve Him.

What a blessed service that will be.

Now there is so much to mar the service of even the best servant, but in that day, Christ will be the only object of service; all will be done with a single eye, and in a way which will glorify Him.

"And they shall see His face."

We read of Moses, how the Lord spake unto him face to face as a man speaketh to his friend.

This will be the portion of the saints in that heavenly glory.

God's glory will be revealed in and through the Lamb, and the saints will be able to gaze upon that glory as revealed in the face of the Lord Jesus, and also reflect it in the sight of others.

"And His name is on their foreheads," New Trans.

It was often the custom in days of old for owners to have their names inscribed upon the foreheads of their slaves, and so here in a similar way there is the public recognition by God of those who are recognised as His servants in divine power and glory.

"And there shall be no night there."

Now in our day we can truly say "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

Here we have God's eternal day followed by no further nights of darkness. Neither, in that glory, is there any need of earthly light whether it be man's artificial light, or God's provided light for the earth as set forth by the sun.

"And they shall reign for ever and ever."

Not only will they reign with Christ the thousand years, but as kings and priests they shall reign for ever and ever.

It was God's original purpose that man should be in this place of rule, but Adam, by reason of sin, forfeited his right to rule, but these purposes are made good in the man Christ Jesus, and us as associated with Him.

This verse closes the description of the heavenly city, and really ends the whole of the prophetic volume.

In what follows we have various warnings and exhortations. We are reminded of Paul in reference to the great revelations which were made to him; how the thorn in the flesh was given to him lest he should be exalted above measure.

We are then shown the infallibility of God's word.

"These sayings are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done, Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book," vv. 6, 7.

The coming of the Lord is referred to on three distinct occasions in this last chapter, and each has its own particular bearing. In v.6, it is clearly in reference to what we have in the previous verses. There we are told how the Lord God had sent His angel to show His servants things which must shortly be done. Then in v.7, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book".

While in a general way we may apply the spirit of these scriptures to ourselves, yet primarily they have reference to the godly Jew who will be upon the earth after the church has been taken to glory, for prophecy has to do with earth.

In v.6, God has been speaking through the prophets, but in v.7, it is the Lord Himself who says, "Behold, I come quickly", and He would seek to encourage those who are seeking to be obedient to God's word.

It is this which the Lord values in the present day, to keep His word, and not deny His name, and so it will be in the day which is yet to come.

Where there is not the love of the truth there will be the believing of a lie, and even a denying of the Lord. But where the soul cleaves to God's word, and refuses to acknowledge any other God than Jehovah Elohim, the coming of the Lord for his deliverance is ever the hope set before him. Then in v.8 we again see John so overwhelmed by the revelation made known to him, that he fain would fall down and worship the angel who had revealed these things to him.

This is the more remarkable because he had been rebuked for this same thing in Ch. 19, v.10.

We know from the epistle to the Colossians how angel worship had crept in among the saints, and how strongly Paul was led to condemn it as robbing the Lord Jesus of His true place in the heart's affection and worship of His people.

Doubtless John was allowed by God to prostrate himself before the angel, and be rebuked so sharply by him, so that it might serve as a warning to all not to do as John had done. Where an angel seeks and receives worship it is only because he has fallen, and is now seeking to oppose God. We have an instance of this in the case of Satan, when he even asked the Lord Jesus to fall down and worship him.

An angel who has not fallen is spoken of as being holy; he has a knowledge of good and evil, but ever seeks to do God's bidding, and would shun to receive the worship due to God alone, and so we see here.

"Do it not, for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book; worship God", v.9. He does not infer that he was one of the brethren, but that as they were servants of God, so also was he, hence he says, "Worship God".

No true servant would seek the worship that was due to God. We see how quickly God smote Herod when the people said, "it is the voice of God"; he evidently accepted the flattery, and failed to give glory to God.

Then in v.10, we read, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand".

This is in striking contrast to what we have in Dan. 12, where we are told, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end", v.4. "Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end", v.9.

Here John is told "Seal not, the time is near". To the Christian the book of prophecy is an open book, and God reveals what He is about to do, even as He did to Abraham of old, when, as a friend, He told him what He was about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah. Immediately the church is taken to glory, God will resume His dealings with the earth, and with His earthly people Israel. He will then seek to assert the claims of His beloved Son to the earth. We are shown how evil will develop, and be dealt with, and how the kingdom will be established in

power and glory. These truths have been revealed by His Spirit through His servants, and it is only by God's Holy Spirit that we are able to enter into and receive these wonderful truths. When the Lord Jesus comes in glory it will be to reward each and all according to their work.

There will be no room then for repentance on the part of the unsaved. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still", v.11.

The coming of the Lord will manifest just where a man is: there will be some who are unjust and filthy, while there will be others who are righteous and holy. We have no reference here to the rapture, although of course it will then also be manifest who are the Lord's and who are not, by the saved being caught up to be with the Lord, and those who are not, being left behind for judgment.

Again, there is no question of rewards at the rapture; all the redeemed are caught up to be with the Lord, and will be changed into His likeness.

When we have responsibility in connection with walk and rewards it always has reference to the appearing of Christ in glory.

It is not that the believer will at that time receive his reward, but that it will be manifest at His appearing what rewards have been given him.

The rewards are given at the time of our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ.

But verse 12 may go further than this and include the rewarding of the wicked also according to their works. As the Judge of the living, the Lord Jesus will be revealed in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and upon those who do not obey the gospel. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last", v.13.

The titles which are used of God are here used and applied to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. We have His divinity clearly set forth in these names. Another has truly said, "As God was the sum and substance of all revelation, being or action, so was Christ".

Then in verses 14, 15 we have striking contrasts drawn between the redeemed and those who are unclean. "Blessed are they that wash their robes that they might have right to the tree of life, and that they should go in by the gates into the city.

Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and fornicators, and the murderers and the idolators, and every one that loves and makes a lie", v's. 14, 15 New Trans. J.N.D.

These verses seem to be inserted by the Spirit of God to indicate on the one hand, the way of blessing, and on the other, the hopeless condition of those who are outside.

Blessing is alone found within the heavenly city, and there is none outside of it.

In Rev. 1:5, we read, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood".

All who enter into the heavenly city must be blood bought, and have their robes washed.

Thus alone can they have access to the tree of life, there to partake of its fruit in all its fulness.

Where there has been no cleansing there can be no entering into that bright scene of glory.

Those who have not been cleansed are outside, and unclean like the dogs.

Some may shudder at the thought that they are linked with such a company as we have here described, but there are only two companies.

There are the cleansed and redeemed inside with God and the Lamb, and there are those who have never come to the Lord for pardon and cleansing, and who are thus still found in their sins, and away from God. "I Jesus hath sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches", v.16.

It is the revelation of Himself as given in this wonderful book, and which has been made known to the churches. "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star", v.16.

To Israel, Christ is the root and offspring of David, David's Lord, yet David's Son, but to the Christian He is the Bright and Morning Star.

To Israel, He will be the Son of righteousness, rising with healing on His wings.

As Christians, we have not to wait for the dawning of the day. Just before the dawn, the bright morning star is seen in the heavens. It reminds us of the fact that before the Lord appears in power and glory to set up His kingdom, He will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

We are also told that when we see Him we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is (see 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 John 3:2). "And the Spirit and the bride say Come, and let him that heareth say Come, and let him that is athirst come, And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely", v.17.

The presentation of Christ as the bright morning star at once awakens the affections of the assembly, and produces, in the power of the Spirit the yearning cry, "Come".

It would have been a wonderful thing for the bride to be able to utter such a cry, but here it is the Spirit of God that leads that cry.

The Spirit and the bride say "Come".

It is a wonderful word, and one which is largely used in the scriptures, being used, it has been said, about 1,900 times. It was first used in Gen. 7, by God Himself, when He could say to Noah, "Come thou, and all thy house into the ark". It was also used by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 11, "Come unto me". But here in Rev. 22, it is an invitation addressed to Christ Himself that He should come.

But there may be some who do not feel that they are led of the Spirit to utter such a cry.

Well, it further says, "And let him that heareth say Come". If they have trusted Christ for salvation they too are invited to join in the cry and say "Come".

Then the Spirit of God leads the church to think of those who may be thirsting for better things but who have never really come in faith to Christ.

If they had, they would have proved the truth of the Lord's words when He could say, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst", John 6:35. But if they have never yet come, or believed on Him to the saving of the soul, they, in view of Christ's speedy return, are urged to come to Christ.

The church does not say "Come to me" as the Saviour could say, but come to Christ, the only Saviour of sinners. But there may be others who say, well, I do not feel that thirst, what am I to do?

The invitation here given would embrace even such, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely". In the first two comes, the invitation is for the Lord to come, but in the last two it is the sinner himself who is invited to come.

He may feel his thirst or he may not, but if he is willing to come there is the water of life for him to drink of freely. Then in verses 18, 19, we have solemn words of warning, "I testify to every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book.

And if any one take from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book", New Trans.

The tree of life and the holy city have been referred to in v.14. The title to have access to the tree of life and even to enter the city lay in the fact that they had washed their robes. Nothing more was needed, but there could be nothing less. Many would add their own thoughts, and seek to take away from God's word, but such will be made to prove that God is not mocked, and that whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap.

Then in v.20, we have the Lord's parting words of cheer, words which should revive the hope and desire of every true believer.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly".

In the response of John, surely it should express the common thought of every true believer, "Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

"If I go", He could say, "I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also", John 14:3.

He will send no angel for us, even as He sent no angel to die for us, but He comes personally with joy and gladness, to call away, to be with Himself, those for whom He has died.

May he Lord direct our hearts into the patient waiting for Christ, and may we be like men who wait for their Lord, who, when He knocks, are ready to open unto Him immediately.

Till He comes, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all", v.21.

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