

## **"The Things Which Are"**

by T. B. Baines.

Section 1 of: **The Revelation of Jesus Christ.**

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The subject of this book is judgment; the style symbolism.

God is revealed as the Almighty, the Eternal, the Judge of all the earth. Christ appears exercising His judicial functions, first in the house of God, and afterwards among the nations. The Holy Ghost is seen, not as the "one Spirit," but in His perfect diversity of action in connection with the government of God.

Here, as in all Scripture, the person of Christ is the central figure, the glory of Christ the central object. But next to the person and glory of Christ the kingdom and the Church occupy the most prominent place.

The world is, however, throughout regarded as a scene of judgment. Hence it is the judgments, and not the blessings, of the earthly kingdom that are here recorded. So, too, the Church on earth is looked upon, not in its privileges, but in its responsibilities, as the house of God, at which judgment must begin. On the other hand, the heavenly glories of the Church, and the heavenly side of the kingdom, about which the Old Testament is silent are here blessedly unfolded.

The style of the book is largely symbolic, and in this it resembles the prophecies of Daniel. But while in Daniel the symbols are generally explained, in this book their interpretation is usually left to be gathered from other portions of Scripture.

Many other features, both in the subject and the style, require notice; but these will be more conveniently examined as they arise than in any preliminary remarks.

The book naturally divides itself into three parts. At the close of the first chapter John is told to "write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be after these." "The things which thou hast seen" are not so much a separate division

as an introduction to "the things which are." But "the things which shall be after these" comprise two distinct classes: those which precede, and those which accompany or follow, the coming and kingdom of Christ. The three divisions of the book are therefore,

First. "The things which are," described in the addresses to the seven churches, and preceded by the introductory vision;

Second. The judgments falling on the earth before the Lord's advent from heaven; and,

Third. The coming and reign of Christ, ending with the judgment of the dead before the great white throne, and leading on to the eternal state in which God is all in all.

#### *PART FIRST*

"THE THINGS WHICH ARE."

(Revelation 1 - 3)

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#### THE PREFACE.

Revelation 1: 1-3.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, [and of] all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Rev. 1: 1-3.) Such is the preface to this book, which is entitled, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." These words, however, do not mean His predicted revelation or manifestation to the world, but a revelation or prophetic communication which He receives from God and transmits to His servants. This shows the character in which the different persons, divine and human, are here presented. God is not looked at as the Father of believers, or even of Jesus Christ, but as sovereign Creator and Judge, communicating to Christ His own counsels. Jesus Christ, again, is not seen as "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," and acquainted with all that is

there hidden, but as the servant, who knows and does nothing of himself, the dependent man to whom God's purposes concerning the judgment of the earth and the coming kingdom are entrusted. He is thus seen in Mark's gospel, where He says, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." (Mark 13: 32.)

To His disciples also He does not here show himself as Head of the body, nor even as the Friend opening to them His heart, but as the Lord giving directions to his servants concerning "the things which must shortly come to pass." This "He sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John." Now angels were God's medium of communication with Israel. Stephen says they "received the law by the disposition of angels" (Acts 7: 53); and in Hebrews, "the word spoken by angels" is contrasted with God speaking by the Son. (Heb. 1: 2; 2: 2.) There is, then, a return to Jewish modes of communication perfectly suitable to the character of a book which unfolds God's dealings with the world when He restores to favour His earthly people; a book which regards the Church, not in its privileges, but in its responsibilities as a witness for Christ, a branch grafted into the good olive tree, which must either bear fruit or be broken off.

It is said the things "must shortly come to pass;" for the Church period is always left indefinite; and though the Lord, "not willing that any should perish," has hitherto mercifully postponed His coming, still His word is, "Behold, I come quickly," and His disciples are to have their "loins girded about, and their lamps burning," and to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord." (Luke 12: 35, 36).

The angel gives the message to John, "who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, — all things that he saw." There is no "and" before the last clause. He does not bear witness to something that he saw *in addition* to the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ, but to all that he saw of them. Here again Christ is not the Son revealing the Father, but the faithful witness testifying God's word. And this word is earnestly commended to our study. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." Of such value is the book in God's eyes. There is a blessing both upon reading and hearing; for the truth is practical, and must be held fast because its accomplishment is near.

## THE INTRODUCTION.

Revelation 1: 4-20.

The introduction comprises – first the greeting (vv. 4-6); next, the general purport of the book, the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory (vv. 7, 8); and lastly, the vision of Jesus as the Son of man in His judicial vesture, walking amidst the golden candlesticks. (vv. 9-20.)

## THE GREETING.

(Verses 4-6.)

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." (vv. 4, 5.)

Here is the usual salutation, "Grace be unto you, and peace;" but not, as in Paul's epistles, "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." On the contrary, God is here named the One "which is, and which was, and which is to come." This is the New Testament equivalent for Jehovah. He is the "I am," the self-existent One, and therefore the expression "which is" stands first. But as the "I am" He was from eternity, and will be to eternity; so it is added, "And which was, and which is to come." This phrase, "is to come," does not refer to His future coming in judgment, but to His eternal existence as the One who always is, always was, and always will be. This is not the way in which God elsewhere reveals Himself in the New Testament; it is a return to the character in which He shows Himself when declaring His ways concerning the world in the Old Testament. It harmonizes therefore with the general scope and object of the book, which unfolds God's actings in government towards the world, and towards the Church, as a professing system in the world.

Again, the Holy Ghost is described as "the seven Spirits which are before His throne." Afterwards He is spoken of under the figure of "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Rev. 4: 5), alluding to the seven lamps of the golden candlestick in the sanctuary. The number seven, so often used in this book, is a well-known Scripture symbol of heavenly perfection. The Spirit therefore is here looked at in

reference rather to the complete circle of His activities than to the oneness of his person, which is so strongly insisted upon in connection with the Church considered as the body of Christ. The place of the seven Spirits, moreover, "before the throne," shows them to be connected with God's ways in the government of the world, not in the formation of the Church.

Further, in this salutation the name of Jesus Christ does not, as is usual elsewhere, follow that of God. He is looked at, not in his divinity, but as the Son of man. He is "the faithful witness," giving to His servants the revelation He has received from God – "What He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth." (John 3: 32.) But as man He is now the risen One, "the first-begotten of the dead;" and in this character He receives dominion, and is made "the Prince of the kings of the earth," just as in Philippians 2: 8-10, *because He went down into death, "therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."* These three characters, which Jesus bears throughout this book – the faithful witness, the One who was dead, but is alive again, and the rightful ruler and judge – none of them relate exclusively to His connection with the Church; while the last clearly shows Him as the Messiah, the man of God's purposes for earthly government.

In all these titles and attributes, whether of God, of the Spirit, or of Jesus Christ, we see a departure from the Church position maintained in the New Testament, and a return to the principles, symbols, and associations of the Old. We are taken from the heavenly dispensation entrusted to Paul, and brought back to the earthly counsels and purposes unfolded in the Psalms and the prophets. All this, as before remarked, is in perfect harmony with the scope and character of this book.

But here a beautiful interruption comes in. Though in the style of the Old Testament, the salutation is to the seven churches, and the Church must respond to the name of Jesus. Suddenly therefore a chorus of praise bursts out – "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father [or, more correctly, "a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father"]; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (vv. 5, 6.).

The Church is built on Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16: 16-18.) The word Father, which in this book is never applied to God's relationship

with believers, is only used five times of his relationship with Christ. And in none of these passages is Christ regarded as Judge, but as connected with the Church or an elect people. Here it is the Church's joyous response to the mention of His name and titles. In the next three instances it occurs in promises to the overcomers in the different churches. It is used once again in connection with the saved remnant who stand with the Lamb on mount Zion, "having His Father's name written in their foreheads." (Rev. 14: 1.) There He is seen as God's anointed King seated in Zion, and declaring the decree, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

It is beautiful to observe how believers cannot think of Jesus even as Judge without exulting joy. For them the judgment has no terrors; for they know Him as the One "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." This gives peace to the conscience, and confidence to the heart. They can add, too, "And hath made us a kingdom – priests unto his God and Father." Peter calls believers "a royal priesthood." They are entitled to reign with Christ, and are priests "to offer up spiritual sacrifices." (1 Peter 2: 5, 9.) They are also the depositaries of God's counsels concerning Christ, and can, even during His rejection, ascribe to Him "glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

THE PURPORT OF THE BOOK.

(Verses 7, 8.)

The salutation is followed by a statement of the grand purpose toward which the whole book is directed: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." (v. 7.) This is not the Lord's coming for His saints; for then He will appear only "unto them that look for Him." (Heb. 9: 28.) Nor is it His coming at the end of the world to judge the dead before the great white throne. The coming here spoken of is that which, as recorded later in this book, precedes His thousand years' reign over the earth.

This is clear from a comparison with other Scriptures. Jesus said to the Jews, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23: 39.) In the passage before us however the Jews do see Him; for "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." Now this is a quotation from Zechariah, describing the effect of Christ's appearing on the faithful remnant of the Jews at

the time of their national deliverance: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son." (Zech. 12: 9, 10.) This quotation shows that the time here spoken of is when the godly remnant of the Jews, lamenting their sin in the rejection of the Messiah, own Him as the One "that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then Jerusalem's deliverance and Judah's blessing will be accomplished, for God "will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

But though a day of repentance and deliverance for the godly Jews, it is a day of solemn judgment for others. "Behold, He cometh with clouds," recalls the words spoken, certainly not as a promise, to Caiaphas and the Council, as representing the unbelieving mass of the people. "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matt. 26: 61) Nor is it only to the Jews that this appearing will be a solemn event. To unbelievers everywhere He will come "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1: 13.)

"I am Alpha and Omega, [the beginning and the ending], saith the Lord" [or rather "the Lord God "], "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (v. 8.) Here it is not Christ that speaks, but the Lord God — Jehovah-Elohim — the Almighty. Now the names of God are not arbitrarily used, but are titles suited to the character in which He is acting. In human matters everyone knows how differently the same persons address each other according to the relationships they occupy at the moment. Take two brothers, both in Parliament, and one the mayor of some borough. In familiar intercourse, they call each other by their Christian names. In corporation business the one would address the other as "your worship." In the House of Commons they would speak of each other as the honourable member for so and so. Each title would be suited to its own place, and quite unsuited to the others, and everybody would understand from the name or title used whet her the one speaking was addressing his brother as a brother, a mayor, or a member of Parliament. Scripture is assuredly not less accurate in the use of the titles applied to God than men are in the use of the titles they give to one another.

It is important therefore to observe that many of the

titles given to God in this book are never found elsewhere in the New Testament, while they are of constant occurrence in the Old. Thus the name "Almighty" is never used in any other book of the New Testament, except once in a quotation. So the name "Lord God," often used in revelation, is never found elsewhere in the New Testament (for 1 Peter 3: 15 should read "the Lord Christ"), except in citations from the Old, or in prophecies like that of Zechariah relating to Israel, which bear throughout an Old Testament character, and are largely made up of Old Testament quotations.

What, then, is the import of this departure from the New Testament style of speaking about God, and this return to Old Testament titles? These titles have a significance. God said to Moses, "I am the Lord [Jehovah] and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them." (Exod. 6: 2, 3.) Thus "Almighty" was the title under which God entered into covenant with Abraham; Jehovah-Elohim, "Lord God," was the title under which He entered into covenant with Israel. Both these covenants are connected with the earth, and have their fulfilment in the earthly reign of the Messiah. The significance, then, of this return to the Old Testament titles is exceedingly great. It marks that God is now reverting to His purposes concerning the earth, and that the character in which He here reveals Himself is not that in which we now know Him, but that which He will take after the Church is caught up to heaven, and when He resumes his long-suspended dealings with Israel and the world in preparation for the Messiah's reign.

#### THE VISION OF CHRIST.

(Verses 9-20.)

The third part of this introduction is the vision of Christ's glory. "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (v. 9.) John was banished to Patmos for his faithfulness to the truth. Writing to believers, he styles himself their brother; but he was also their "companion in the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience of Jesus Christ." The words are singularly, but most expressively, grouped. First, there is the companionship of believers in Christ's sufferings. This suggests that "if we suffer we shall also reign with Him;" hence, after the "tribulation," comes the "kingdom." But the kingdom



is not yet. Christ has not yet taken his throne, but is seated at God's right hand, waiting "till His enemies be made This footstool." Now they are triumphant, and His people are called upon to share His patience. That they had kept the word of His patience is one of His highest commendations to the church of Philadelphia. (Rev. 3: 10.) In all these things, the tribulation, and the kingdom, and the patience, it is the servant's privilege to be associated with his Master. The tribulation and the patience are his present portion; the kingdom will come in God's time.

"I was [or became] in the Spirit on the Lord's-day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet." (v. 10.) This does not describe his usual spiritual condition, but a state in which he was, under the Spirit's power, receiving inspired communications from Christ. "The Lord's-day" is not "the day of the Lord," from which in the original it differs in form as widely as in meaning. The day of the Lord is the time of Christ's power and glory on earth. But the Lord's-day was a day which John spent in Patmos. In creation God appointed a day of rest, and in His covenant with Israel marked it specially as His own. The covenant is gone, and the rest of the old creation broken. God therefore, instead of calling us to share his rest from the old creation, calls upon us to share His joy in the new. The day on which this new creation began, by Christ's resurrection from the dead, is called "the Lord's-day." It is not a transfer of the sabbath from the last day of the week to the first, for this would destroy the meaning of both, but an entirely new thing, resting on an entirely new foundation.

Being thus "in the Spirit on the Lord's-day," he adds, I "heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, [I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and,] What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches [which are in Asia]; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." (vv. 10, 11.) The words in brackets are omitted here by the best authorities. The trumpet signifies God speaking with power and majesty. It was with the sound of a trumpet that He gave the law on mount Sinai; it is with the sound of a trumpet that Christ will summon the believing dead to meet Him in the air.

Looking round, John beholds the form from which this voice proceeds. "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down

to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (vv. 12-16.)

Here Christ appears as Son of man, clothed in judicial robes. He is "in the midst of the seven candlesticks," which, as we afterwards learn, "are the seven churches" here addressed. (v. 20.) His majesty befits the One to whom all judgment is committed. The "garment down to the foot" is the judicial robe, as distinguished from the warrior "vesture dipped in blood," with which He afterwards comes forth to execute judgment (Rev. 19: 13); since here judgment is only pronounced, and not executed. He is "girt about the paps with a golden girdle," the symbol of divine righteousness; for when he acts in judgment, "righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins." (Isa. 11: 5.)

His person is as indicative of judgment as His robe, and shows His divine glory as well as His human exaltation. "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." In Daniel's vision, when the judgment of the earth began, "the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool." (Dan. 7: 9.) The glory therefore which in Daniel belongs to the Ancient of days, is here seen investing the "One like unto the Son of man."

"His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Both figures signify judgment. Brass was the material of the altar on which the sacrifice was burnt to meet the claims of God's righteousness. The eyes like fire show searching, discriminating judgment; for fire is what tests, purifying the good, destroying the bad. Thus in Malachi, Christ comes "like a refiner's fire" (Mal. 3: 2), and when Israel is restored, the Lord will purge "the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." (Isa. 4: 4.) Paul, too, says that "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. 3; 13.)

"And His voice was as the sound of many waters." This figure is eminently expressive of majesty and power, and

is so used by our own poets, as Wordsworth says of Milton: "Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea." In Ezekiel 1; 24 the sound made by the wings of the cherubim is compared to "the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty;" and afterwards, "the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and His voice was like a noise of many waters" (Ezek. 43: 2.) A voice like the sound of many waters is, therefore, a Scriptural figure of the glory and majesty of God, and it is in this glory that Christ, though man, now appears.

"And He had in His right hand seven stars." These are afterwards said to be "the angels of the seven churches." (v. 20.) Whatever the force of the expression, the power which Christ here holds in His right hand is clearly nothing less than complete authority, whether for ministry or government, over the churches.

"And out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword." The word of God is likened to a sharp two-edged sword, and though this refers to its power on the conscience, it is no less sharp in judgment also. "He that rejecteth me," said our Lord, "and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: *the word* that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12: 48.) He threatens the evil-doers in Pergamos to "fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2: 16); and the followers of the beast are "slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth." (Rev. 19: 21.) So Isaiah, foretelling His coming, says, He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall He slay the wicked." (Isa. 11: 4.)

"And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Nothing can more strikingly picture His power and glory than this figure of the noonday sun. As the greatest of God's visible works, it is the symbol of supreme authority, "the greater light" which He has created "to rule the day." This was the glory in which John and his companions beheld him when He "was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." (Matt. 17: 2.) The transfiguration was the testimony which God gave to chosen witnesses of "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1: 16); and in this book, where his coming "with clouds" is the great climax to which everything tends, we behold Him clothed in the same glory.

Such are the judicial robes and majesty of Christ in

connection with "the things which are," as walking "in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." They are suited to Him as judging in the house of God, but are not the insignia either of "the prince of the kings of the earth," or the executor of God's counsels concerning His earthly people. When He appears in these characters, as connected with "the things which shall be after these," the vesture and titles we have been examining are changed for others of a totally different kind.

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." (v. 17.) No wonder! Who can behold Christ judging the Church according to its responsibility, without feeling the dreadful failure? But His words dispel all dread. "And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth [or, "the living One "]; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death." (vv. 17, 18.) What reassuring words. True, Christ is judge, and is clothed in majesty befitting His office; but to John He says, "Fear not." And why? Because He, the first and the last, the living One, has become man, has died, and has risen. He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4: 25.) Thus "we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He *is*, so are we *in this world*." (1 John 4: 17.) He has robbed Satan of his power, death of its sting, the grave of its victory, and He now has in His hands "the keys of hades and of death." This victory, wrought by His death and resurrection, sets the soul at rest, and dispels the fear of judgment.

The Lord then charges John: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" [or, "after these"]. (v. 19.) "The things which thou hast seen" are those already related. There remain therefore "the things which are, and the things which shall be after these." In the fourth chapter (v. 1) John is bidden to come up into heaven, and behold the things which must be after these. "The things which are," therefore, comprise those named in the second and third chapters; "the things which shall be after these" comprise those named in the following chapters. The first were seen by John on earth, the second in heaven.

The symbols are then explained: "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks [which thou sawest] are the seven churches." (v. 20.) There has been much discussion as to what is meant by the angels. They are clearly not angels in the ordinary sense; for there

is no Scripture showing angels to have charge of local churches; and who can suppose that Christ would speak to angels through the prophet? The angel, too, is here identified with the moral condition of the Church, and must therefore be a part of it, some person or persons holding towards it a place of special responsibility. Some have inferred that it means a clergyman or official minister, like those now found through nearly the whole of Christendom; but this is mere assumption, and an assumption which is contradicted by all other Scripture. Had God instituted such a ministry He would have revealed it plainly, not left it to be surmised from a passage whose mystical character appears upon its face. The word "angel" carries the idea of representation, and seems to be here used figuratively to describe those who are responsible, from their gift or influence, for the condition of the Church. These doubtless included teachers and rulers, but no information is given as to their appointment or functions. This must be gathered from other parts of the Word.

The seven golden candlesticks – a figure borrowed from the seven lamps of the tabernacle – symbolize the seven churches. They are "golden;" for the Church is founded on God's righteousness, and so bears the stamp of its divine origin. But they are candlesticks, not candles. The Church is not a source of light, and the claim to be so has been one of the most fruitful seeds of evil in Christendom. It is, however, responsible for holding forth the light; and if it fails in this, it is useless. Hence the threat that the candlestick will be removed out of its place.

#### ADDRESSES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

Revelation 2, 3.

"The things which are" comprise the state of the seven churches in Asia, as shown in the following addresses or letters; but they probably also give a short prophetic outline of the whole history of the Church on earth. While in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, however, the Church is looked upon as the body of Christ, which of course can never be judged, in the Revelation it is looked upon merely as a professing system, responsible to Christ, and destined to be judged according to its faithfulness. In these letters the judgment is pronounced, though not executed.

Two points claim notice before going into details. First, in the three earlier epistles the Lord's coming is not

named, while in the others it holds a prominent place. Again, in the three earlier epistles the exhortation to hear is put before the promise to the overcomer, while in the four others it is put after. Even in a man's writing such a change could scarcely be an accident; but in the word of God the idea of accident is impossible, and some sufficient reason must therefore exist. The simplest explanation is that in the first three letters, the Church, though failing, is not yet looked upon as hopelessly bad, and therefore the whole body is still exhorted to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." But in the following letters the Church as a whole is regarded as reprobate, so that none can now be exhorted to hear the Spirit's words, except the overcomers, the true believers in the midst of the corrupt profession.

This explanation obviously favours the thought that in these epistles we have a prophetic outline of the history of Christendom from the decay of first love, as seen at Ephesus, till it is finally spued out of Christ's mouth as threatened at Laodicea. In the three earlier stages there is still a corporate conscience, so that the whole Church can be exhorted to hear; whereas in the four later all corporate conscience is gone, and the appeal can only be made to the true believer. The three earlier phases moreover pass away before the Lord's coming, so that this event is not named in addressing them. The four others, though arising in the order of the epistles, run side by side to the end, and in these therefore the Lord's coming, or its effect, is held out either in the shape of encouragement or of warning.

The idea of a prophetic character in these epistles is further supported by the mystical number of the churches, and by the remarkable agreement with historic fact. Why seven churches? The number seven is constantly used in this book to mark a complete cycle. Now what more probable or more gracious than that the Lord should under the figure of these seven churches give a sketch of the various phases of Christendom during the complete cycle of its history on earth in addressing a certain number of churches, each according to its own circumstances, the selection of a symbolic number would have had no meaning. But if, besides this immediate object, the addresses had a prophetic scope, the choice of the number seven is in perfect harmony with the symbolic character of the book.

The parallel between the state of things described in these letters, and the various phases of Church history from the earliest to the latest time, will come before us more clearly as we look at the letters in detail.

Each address contains four parts; first, the special character in which Christ presents himself; second, the judgment He pronounces, and the words of encouragement or warning which He utters; third, the reward promised to the overcomer; and fourth, the exhortation to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This last is always in the name words, though, as already stated, not always in the same order. The others vary in the different epistles, and have always a more or less obvious connection with one another. We shall now examine the addresses individually.

EPHESUS.

(Rev. 2: 1-7)

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." (v. 1.) The stars signify the angels or mystical representatives of the seven churches, those who are responsible for teaching and for government, as the stars give light and rule the course of time. The gift and authority for these purposes belong to Christ. Man may make rules for the government of the Church, or for the ordination of teachers and pastors, but this is really a usurpation, however undesigned, of Christ's authority. He holds the "stars in His right hand," and walks in discriminating judgment among the seven churches, or golden candlesticks.

He thus sums up the condition of the church of Ephesus: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." (vv. 2, 3.) How the Lord loves to commend whatever He can in His people! As the apostle exhorts believers, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4: 8), so the blessed Lord Himself, even in His judicial office, delights first to recognize and approve whatever good His eye can discover. And here there was much outwardly good. Not only were there works, labour, and patience, but there was godly jealousy for holiness, godly judgment of falsehood, and earnest care for the Lord's name expressed in patient and unwearied endurance.

Yet there was a lack. In writing to the Thessalonians Paul speaks of their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 1. 3.) At Ephesus there is work, but it is not said to be the "work of faith;" there is labour, but it is not spoken of as the "labour of love;" there is patience, but it is not called the "patience of hope." Christ was ever before the Thessalonians, and so faith, hope, and love were all occupied with Himself. Some of this was still left at Ephesus, but it was on the ebb. One may be busy in works even where the power which once prompted them has largely declined. A church may manifest great outward zeal and activity, soundness of doctrine and discipline, even after the dry-rot of waning affection is secretly eating away its very life. So it was in this favoured Church of Ephesus, where the declension foretold by Paul (Acts 20: 29) had already set in.

Hence the Lord goes on to say, "Nevertheless I have ["somewhat" is not in the original, and weakens the sense] against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." (v. 4.) To the world, perhaps to themselves, all seemed fair; no decay was suspected. But "He which searcheth the reins and hearts" saw the germs of evil as yet hidden from other eyes. What is it to the loving bridegroom that the bride be faultless in her behaviour, if her affections are growing cold? Will mere propriety of conduct, or diligence in duty, satisfy the heart that thirsts for love? Can a love like Christ's be contented with a cold, though active, attention to Christian work, or a barren, though scrupulous, orthodoxy of faith, while the heart is not aglow with affection for Himself? Love demands love, and no deference and diligence can atone for its absence. There was therefore here a deep wound inflicted on that blessed One whose love was so coldly met, and He warns them of what the result of their waning affections must be.

"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." (v. 5) This may seem harsh treatment for such an offence, but the Lord looks forward to ultimate consequences. The word "quickly" is doubtful, and hardly agrees with the long-suffering which marks the Lord's action. But however great the long-suffering, the end is certain, unless repentance comes in. The only safe place for the soul is near Christ. A church once taken up with work, but growing cold in its affections, may for a while escape scandalous evil and corruption, but it has lost its security. The only resource is repentance, a return to first works. If it does not repent, its fall,



though possibly delayed, is sure. Its candlestick will be removed; it will cease to be a bearer of the light entrusted to it; God will openly disown it as unfit for His use.

But why urge a return to "first works," since its works at this time were commended? Because in God's eyes the work is judged by the motive. Suppose two children each brought their mother a present of equal value, but while the one showed its love to her in all its ways, the other proved by its manner that its love was poor and cold, which present would have the greater value in the mother's eyes? So with Christ. The work may be outwardly the same, but how different when springing from a heart burning with love to Himself, and when performed from a chill sense of duty, or in a lifeless spirit of routine.

Looking at the address historically, the failure and the warning are very solemn. Even in Paul's life the decline from first love was clearly seen. "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1: 15); "at my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me (2 Tim. 4: 16); such are the sorrowful statements of the apostle in one of his latest epistles. And the decline after his death was, as he forewarned the Ephesian elders, rapid and general. The epistles of John prove that grave evils, both of practice and doctrine, had already shown themselves in his days. The first downward step in the history of the Church had therefore been already taken when the book of Revelation was written. With the Church generally, as with single gatherings, the declension was the same. It began everywhere with a decay of first love. The world, the flesh, and other things came in between Christ and the affections; and the result was speedily discerned by the heart-searching Judge.

The warning is still more solemn. The Church is summoned to repent and to do the first works. Who, alas does not know that it has turned a deaf ear to this call, that as a professing system it has grown more and more corrupt? The end, then, must be just what is here foretold. The Church will be judged, its candlestick removed, itself disowned as an instrument for holding forth God's light in the world.

We return, however, to this particular church. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." (v. 6.) The Lord lingers over everything in his people's ways that can really please Him. The Nicolaitanes are described in the epistle to Pergamos as holding "the doctrine of Balaam,

who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." (v. 14.) This shows the character of their deeds. Balaam, when he could not curse the children of Israel, counselled Balac to seduce them into idolatry, and an abandonment of that separate place which they were called upon to hold in the world. Such, whatever its special form, was the general tendency of the Nicolaitane doctrine. It was rather their deeds than their doctrines that were judged by the church at Ephesus, and in this the Lord owns their faithfulness.

Then comes the general exhortation: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (v. 7.) It is not said "to the church," but "to the churches;" so that he who has an ear is charged to weigh, not only what is said to his own church, but to all the others. The exhortation is therefore general, and addressed to all believers.

Then follows the promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (v. 7.) Man has lost, his own paradise, and is driven away from the tree of life, lest he "eat and live for ever" (Gen. 3: 22.) Yet his heart is always seeking to make for himself a paradise down here, forgetting that the world is under God's judgment. It was this worldliness that was cooling the affections of the Ephesian saints towards Christ. How does He seek to recall them? He reminds them of their heavenly portion. This world was not their rest; for it is polluted. But "there remaineth a rest to the people of God," and where is it? Where is the believer to find his rest? where is the object of his affections now? "Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." The paradise of God is the place where Christ dwells, and the only true rest, the only tree of life, for the believer is there. It is, then, to this heavenly scene, into which Jesus has himself entered, to this scene in which His people are to enjoy their true portion that He recalls the wandering and waning affections of the Church. Alas! how little response His appeal has found! how soon the sense of the heavenly calling was lost and the Church, instead of seeking the things which are above, became immersed in worldliness and corruption.

SMYRNA.

(Rev. 2: 8-11)

If in Ephesus the Lord finds a decay of first love, in

Smyrna we see Him overruling Satan's malice to restore sense of the former freshness. We have here a church under persecution, or, looking at the wider historical bearing of the epistles, the state of the Church after it had incurred the enmity of the world's ruling power.

The Lord graciously adapts Himself to these circumstances. "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." (v. 8) Judge as He is, He never forgets His people's wants, and in trial and suffering He is still with them. But his care is not shown now as in the Old Testament. Then He was not known as the Conqueror of death, and His way of intervening for His saints was to save them from death, delivering them out of the furnace, or shutting the mouths of the lions. Satan might try Job, but a limit was imposed "Behold, he is in thine hand; only save his life." (Job 2: 6.) Here, however, is no such restriction; they were to be "faithful unto death." No deliverance on this side the grave is promised. And why? Because a believer now knows Christ, not only as able to save *from* death, but as having triumphed *over* death. He is "the first and the last," that is, God having all power in Himself; but He is also the One which was dead, and is alive;" for He, as man, has borne death in our stead, and been "raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." (Rom. 6: 4.) The believer is therefore secure. The death of the body is only a door leading into Christ's presence; and from the second death, the lake of fire, he is already delivered.

The Lord goes on "I know thy [works and] tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." (v. 9.) What a contrast between this and the church of Laodicea, which boasted, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," while the Lord counts it "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. 3: 17.) How true it is that in the things of God "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Especially in these days, what folly to be talking of greatness and prosperity amid the ruin and failure of all that is responsible for Christ's name here on earth.

But their tribulation and poverty did not tempt them into tolerating evil. They rejected the false pretension which claimed the position of Jews, but is here called the synagogue of Satan. Judaism is a religion fitted for this world, and for man after the flesh. Hence it put man

under law, and had a worldly ritual and priesthood. This is just what Satan has brought into Christendom. From the first Paul withstood the judaizing of Christianity, which sapped the very foundations of the gospel committed to his charge, and the heavenly truths of which he was the special minister. In Smyrna this doctrine, whatever form it took, was as busy as elsewhere; but the poor tried saints remained true, and "earnestly contended for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," in opposition to this attempted corruption. The Lord notes and approves their fidelity.

He then speaks of what was before them, and gives them words of encouragement and comfort: "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.) He does not promise deliverance, but sustaining power. "In the world," Christ tells His disciples, "ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16: 33.) So the apostle could say, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Rom. 8: 37.) In like manner here, they should suffer; but they were to look forward to their sufferings without fear, for Christ's power was above Satan's. True, God permitted the devil to try them, as he did Job, but it was only that they might come all the brighter out of the furnace. He was allowed to cast some of them into prison, and some were put to death, but his power was restrained even as to the duration of the evil. It was to be for "ten days," at all events a limited time. They are exhorted to be "faithful unto death," and they should receive a "crown of life."

Looking at this church as a picture of the second phase in the history of Christendom, it is a fact that the fiery persecutions which the Church suffered between the reigns of Trajan and Diocletian, if they did not restore purity of doctrine and discipline, called forth deep devotion and love to the Lord Himself, while many of the worst heresies which early invaded the Church were vigorously and faithfully withstood. It has been noted too that some of these persecutions, especially the great closing one in the reign of Diocletian, lasted for ten years, which may perhaps be shadowed forth in the "ten days" here spoken of.

"The crown of life" is again mentioned in James's epistle in connection with faithfulness in trial. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath

promised to them that love Him." (James 1: 12.) Paul speaks of another crown: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Tim. 4: 8.) And Peter tells the faithful elders that "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5: 4.) "The crown of life" suggests the complete triumph over all the foes ranged against the believer; "the crown of righteousness," the just apportionment of the rewards which "the righteous Judge" will dispense; "the crown of glory," the full recognition of the faithful service rendered, often in obscurity and with little appreciation from man, down here in the world.

The exhortation, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (v. 11), is again addressed to all the assembly, instead of being confined to the overcomers. To the latter it is said, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (v. 11.) This falls short of the warmth of recognition bestowed upon the overcomers in some other churches, but the crown of life had already been promised to those bearing the overcomer's character — those who remained "faithful unto death." The suitability of such a promise to those who were threatened with the first death must be obvious to all.

PERGAMOS.

(Rev. 2: 12-17.)

In Smyrna we see a measure of devotion kindled by the fiery persecution which Satan directed against the church. But where violence fails, craft often meets with better success. Both resources are at Satan's command, and on the defeat of one he readily betakes himself to the other. Against the blessed Lord he tried both, exhausting all his wiles in the wilderness, and all his rage at the cross. How signally on both occasions to his own shame, and the glory of his adorable foe! With Paul at Philippi he first sought to damage the gospel by backing it up, and thus confounding it with Satanic energy. Baffled in this, he again tries to crush it by violence, once more sustaining an ignominious defeat.

So it was with these churches. In Smyrna he tried persecution, but this only aroused a greater spirit of earnestness and devotion. In Pergamos he tried his wiles, and his worldly snares lulled the church into

carelessness and indifference. There is something sadly suggestive in the way the Lord presents Himself to this assembly: "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." (v. 12.) What a change from the last epistle! There, to a people appointed to die, the Lord makes Himself known as "the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." Here it is as the Judge carrying the sharp two-edged sword. In Smyrna He reveals Himself as having the power of life; here, as having the power of death.

"I know [thy works, and] where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth." (v. 13.) There was therefore much faithfulness still left; for He says, "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith," and this amidst severe persecution, in which one martyr named Antipas had suffered death. All this the Lord graciously owns. But still there was failure. "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat [or throne] is." This is a figurative expression, nor do we know the exact reference in this particular church. But there can be little doubt as to its general meaning. What is Satan's throne? It is in contrast with God's throne, which is in heaven. Later in this book Satan gives to the beast, the great sovereign of the world, "his power, and his seat [or throne], and great authority." (Rev. 13: 2.) Satan's throne then is that usurped worldly power which, in the temptation, he claimed as his own, and which Scripture repeatedly declares him to possess, styling him the "prince of this world" and the "god of this world," the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

The church of Pergamos then had settled down into the world, the scene of Satan's authority. This implies no outward or scandalous wickedness. Satan is quite content to see Christians becoming worldly. So long as they are untrue to Christ by admitting the world into their hearts, his object is gained quite as effectually as if he had betrayed them into the grossest sin. When the world, whether "the religious world" or any other, takes the place to which Christ is entitled, the ardent love for His person and the bright hope of his return disappear, and coldness, deadness, toleration of evil, indifference to His claims, are sure to come in. Open evil may follow, but the mischief is done whether this is the case or not.

In Pergamos the effect was the permission of evil which

was most offensive to Christ. "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes [which thing I hate]. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." (vv. 14-16.) We have already seen the character of this evil. Just as Balaam taught Balac to seduce the Israelites into idolatry and commerce with his own people (that is, with the heathen world), so does Satan try to draw the believer into that which abandons Christ's claims, and gives the world supreme control over his heart. Such was the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. What shape it took is a matter of indifference, but its moral character is plainly indicated by the comparison with Balaam.

Here then, as compared with Ephesus, is marked declension. In Ephesus "the deeds of the Nicolaitanes" had aroused hatred. In Pergamos "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" was tolerated, and we may be sure that the practice did not lag far behind. Indeed, as a general rule, the practice runs ahead of the doctrine, and evil is not formally sanctioned until it has long been tacitly allowed. Probably the poison was served up in a very attractive form as a philosophical and progressive element, for human nature is ever the same. In the vanity of his heart man always fancies that he can improve upon the word of God by adapting it to the greater enlightenment and liberality of his own times, and applying the wisdom which knew not God to modernize and refine the revelation which God has given. How few, alas! in our own days who can give God credit for a wisdom superior to modern thought, a wisdom into which any intrusion of man's opinions or philosophy is but presumptuous folly.

If we look at this church as foreshadowing the third stage of ecclesiastical history, it closely corresponds with the facts which the annals of Christendom bring before our view. For after the persecutions which the Church endured under the heathen emperors, the favour and worldly prosperity which awaited it under Constantine and his successors rapidly corrupted both its morals and its doctrines. In many cases the heathen were won over by the adoption of pagan rites and festivals as parts of Christian worship, or as holidays in the Christian calendar. Still worse was the open and shameless worldliness of that which called itself by Christ's name. It had settled down where Satan's throne was, and

henceforth the history of Christendom for more than a thousand years was one of growing conformity to the world, and indifference to the claims of its absent Lord. All heavenly truth was dropped, and even real Christians lost sight of the Scripture teaching that the believer is already united with Christ in heaven, and is called upon to wait for His return as a "blessed hope."

But the Lord does not yet treat the church as hopelessly ruined. The evil is viewed as local rather than general; a mortified limb needing excision, rather than a mortified body for which there is nothing but death. The whole church was indeed responsible, and is therefore called to repentance under the threat of speedy visitation; but the objects of judgment are only those who themselves hold the evil doctrine. "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them [not thee] with the sword of my mouth." Evil may grow till the whole church is corrupted, and the faithful ones are looked upon as a detached remnant. So it is with the churches addressed after this, or at least with the phases of Christendom which these churches represent. But here matters have not yet reached this stage, and hence the church as a whole, though threatened, is still acknowledged, while judgment is confined to the evil-doers.

The exhortation, therefore, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (v. 17), is once more addressed to the whole assembly. The promise to the overcomer is very beautiful: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (v. 17.) When the church had "in their hearts turned back again into Egypt," were eating things sacrificed unto idols, lusting after the leeks and onions, the good things of this world, Christ presents Himself as the "hidden manna," the "true bread from heaven" which, unseen by the world, can satisfy the heart of the hungry believer. Nor is it only that he feeds on Christ in humiliation, which is what the manna typifies, but he has a special link also with Christ in glory. True, he gives up the worldly position and dignity after which the Church is striving, but what are these compared with the white stone from Christ's own hand, as a mark of his approbation, and engraved with a secret name, a love token known only to Him who gives and to him who receives it? Who would not rejoice to have such a secret between his soul and Christ? It is the portion of the overcomer in the days of advancing worldliness and corruption. Alas! that we should know so little about it.



THYATIRA.

(Rev. 2: 15-29.)

We now come to a different state of things. In Thyatira there is still much faithfulness and zeal, but the mass is corrupt and the exhortation to hear is no longer addressed to the whole church, but only to the faithful. Moreover, in this and the following epistles the Lord's coming is named, seeming to show that, in the historical view, we have now reached a phase in the annals of Christendom which will last till the end of the Church's history on earth.

"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of lire, and His feet are like fine brass." (v. 18.) Here Christ appears as "the Son of God," but the Son of God in judgment. "His eyes, like unto a flame of fire," search into and try everything. "His feet like fine brass" symbolise the righteous judgment He has come to pronounce. All this is very solemn.

There is still much on which His eye delights to dwell. "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last [or rather, "and thy last works "] to be more than the first." (v. 19.) These certainly were not the works of Jezebel, whose doings characterise the bulk of the church. They doubtless come from the remnant afterwards named. But before going into the solemn charges He is about to bring, He dwells upon these bright features, thrown up into all the stronger relief by the dark background against which they stand.

"Notwithstanding I have ["a few things" is omitted by the best authorities] against thee, because thou sufferest that woman [or "thy wife"] Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." (v. 20.) Jezebel was the heathen queen who, having decoyed her husband into idolatry, usurped the regulation of religious affairs in Israel, persecuting the worship of Jehovah, and introducing that of Baal. Balaam was a seducer outside, and represents the snare which the world became to the Church. Jezebel was a corrupter inside, and represents the shameless alliance of the Church with idolatry and with the world. The difference in guilt between Balaam and Jezebel may not have been great, but the difference in position was enormous, and the later figure shows far more complicity

on the part of the Church than is pointed to by the figure of Balaam. In Pergamos there were individuals, probably numbers, guilty of the evil, but the church as a whole is looked at as free. In Thyatira there were individuals, probably numbers, free from the evil, but the church as a whole is looked at as guilty.

If we may accept the fairly supported reading, "thy wife Jezebel," the point is even stronger. Ahab stood for Israel, and was responsible for it morally, as the angel or mystical representative of the Church is responsible for it here. Ahab's guilt was, first, that he married the daughter of a heathen king, thus identifying himself with the worship of Baal; and next that he permitted her, an alien and an idolatress, to become a religious regulator, to "call herself a prophetess" in God's heritage. This is what the Church, historically looked at, did after the Pergamos stage, in the days of Rome's ecclesiastical supremacy. The state of things then was an alliance between the professing Church and the world, together with an introduction of all sorts of idolatrous practices, which, under the pretence of divine authority, the Roman hierarchy brought in. Indeed, in the historical view of the churches, the parallel is closer than in its application to the church of Thyatira; for Rome, like Jezebel, not only introduced heathen corruptions, but drenched the earth with the blood of those who refused to accept them.

Still the Lord's long-suffering grace lingers, even in the case of Jezebel, as He says, "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not;" or more correctly, "And I gave her space to repent, and she willeth not to repent of her fornication." (v. 21.) How long that space was in the assembly of Thyatira we know not; but in the historical church which that assembly represents what long-suffering patience, what constant calls to repentance, what warnings in one form or another has not the Lord given, and all in vain! "She willeth not to repent of her fornication." It is not mere blindness and ignorance, but will acting in opposition to God.

Judgment however, though tardy, comes at length: "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery [or fornication] with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her [not "their"] deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." (vv. 22, 23.) The dreadful state of things is here manifest, and the judgment sharp and sure. Not only has first love to Christ declined, but adulterous love to the

world and idolatry, or spiritual fornication, have taken its place. Jezebel is to be cast into a bed, given up to her own abandoned ways; while those who hold intercourse with her are to be brought into "great tribulation," and her children are to be killed with death. The figure is borrowed from the fate of Jezebel's followers and children in the Old Testament – the former were pursued and destroyed; the latter put to death. The fate of Jezebel herself, historically considered, we shall trace later in the book when we come to the judgment of the great harlot, whose flesh is eaten like that of the wicked Israelitish queen. (Rev. 17: 16.) The churches see this judgment, and recognize Christ as the One who tries the reins and hearts. But there are degrees of guilt even among the followers of Jezebel, and the judgment is therefore discriminating: "I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Such was the Lord's righteous mode of dealing with the church of Thyatira, or with the great mass of it which had become permeated with this corruption. Such will be His righteous judgment of the worldly system which this Asiatic church represents.

It is a relief to turn from this dark picture to the remnant to which the Lord now addresses Himself: "But unto you I say [the word "and" should be omitted], the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan (as they speak), I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." (vv. 24, 25.) There were in Thyatira simple believers who did not hold the doctrine that had wrought such mischief, and were ignorant of Satan's devices. On them no judgment should fall; but surrounded as they were with evil, they are counselled to hold fast what they had "till I come." The Lord's coming is now held out before the faithful as the object of their hope. This is ever the point to which He directs the eyes of His people. When He is put aside, and the world takes the place to which He alone is entitled in the Church's affections, He reminds those whose hearts are still true to Himself that He is coming, and bids them wait patiently for this blessed hope.

Then follows the promise: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (vv. 26-29.) "My works" is a peculiar expression, recalling Paul's language. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The believer should be in his walk the

reproduction, as it were, of Christ. He is quickened together with Christ, has by the Spirit the same life, and the life He thus possesses is to show itself in his daily conduct and ways. The blessed Lord was, amidst all the trials and sorrows of His earthly path, the spotlessly pure, the unswervingly faithful, the absolutely obedient One; and amidst all the corruptions and unfaithfulness of Christendom, believers are in this respect called upon to exhibit the life of Christ in their own walk and conversation. There is a contrast, too, between the works of Christ and those of Jezebel. While those seduced by Jezebel are threatened with judgment unless they repent "of *her* works," those faithful to Christ are promised reward if they keep "*His* works."

And what is this reward? "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." Here, while Jezebel and her followers were taking their pleasure, and lording it over the world, those who stood aloof from her iniquities must give up worldly advantages and distinctions. They share Christ's rejection here, and they are promised that when He reigns they shall reign with Him. They may well afford to let go the authority and influence now usurped by Jezebel; for to them will be given "power over the nations." Christ will come to reign, and the first act will be judgment. Even in this believers will come forth with Him as "the armies of heaven" when He appears to rule the nations with a rod of iron. They must therefore have been previously taken to heaven at Christ's coming for his saints. Hence the hope of His coming immediately follows: "I will give him the morning star." Christ is the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." (Rev. 22: 16.) As "the root and the offspring of David" He will take the kingdoms of the earth for His own; as "the bright and morning star" He is His people's hope, the herald of the coming dawn amidst the darkness which broods over the world. The two things therefore presented for the encouragement of the wayworn saints, amidst all the wickedness and persecution that Jezebel had brought into the house of God, are the prospect of reigning with Him, and the hope of His return to take them to be with Himself. The exhortation to hear follows, addressed for the first time, not to the Church as a whole, but only to the overcomers.

SARDIS.

(Rev. 3: 1-6.)

"And unto the angel of the church of Sardis write; These

things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (v. 1.) The Holy Ghost is seen in this book in the diversity of His action as "the seven Spirits of God" in connection with the throne, and not in His unity as forming the body of Christ. He is here the One through whom Christ as Lord administers His government of the churches. Christ has also the seven stars. They are His, though no longer said, as at Ephesus, to be in His right hand; for man has actually usurped them in practice.

But how sad the state of the assembly at Sardis. There is not, indeed, the gross evil and corruption seen in Thyatira, but here for the first time the Lord finds nothing to commend. The censure begins at once, and the state is described in a single word — soulless profession, a name to a live, but dead. It was not scandalous wickedness, but decent death; the form retained, the heart gone; Christ owned in word, ignored in deed; creeds correct, conduct respectable, life departed. How does it please the Lord, who is looking for love from the Church, that it should have sound doctrine or outward propriety, if the affections are not only waning, but gone, His name held, His word read, His truth owned, Himself forgotten? Such was the state of the assembly at Sardis. It had become just a part of the world, as barren and lifeless towards God as any other portion.

No doubt there were exceptions, and in these a little glimmer of life still remains. He says therefore, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God." (v. 2.) What a picture! For the most part dead, the small remnant ready to die. It does not say their works were bad, but that they were not "perfect," not complete; they had stopped short. After aiming at something good they had grown careless and never reached it. The Lord calls them therefore to awake out of their listless state, to be watchful, and to fan the dying embers of spiritual life once more into heat and flame, Moreover He assumes that they have the knowledge of the truth, at least intellectually, which, of course, so far increases their responsibility. "Remember therefore," He says, "how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." (v. 3.) These words are important. It is not a call upon the Church to reform itself, but a reference to the one standard which God owns when the Church has utterly and hopelessly failed. When man's word and man's authority have brought in nothing but confusion and ruin, God's word and God's authority still remain unmoved, the

firm rock which nothing can shake amidst all the contending waves and currents of human opinion.

Surely every one must recognize the resemblance between this church and Protestant Christendom. No doubt a mighty stream of spiritual power and blessing issued forth at the time of the Reformation; but this warm current as it spread quickly cooled, and after no long interval froze into a dreary and lifeless sea. The faith which had animated preachers in the pulpit and martyrs at the stake dwindled from its divine proportions till it became little more than the badge of a political party. The Protestants sought and accepted worldly patronage, and recognized temporal sovereigns as heads of the several churches. Thus the Protestant Church, instead of an ambitious hierarchy ruling over the kings of the world, became the pliant tool of worldly princes, and speedily sank into spiritual torpor and death. It was free from the scandals and idolatry of Romanism, but lacked all life and godly power. It had the word of God, the diffusion of which was the most blessed result of the Reformation, and it had a certain amount of newly-recovered truth; but its works were "not perfect." It got hold of truths and let them lie powerless, never seeking to recover more, and settling down into a dry traditionalism less fertile in evil, but hardly less barren in good, than the worst type of Romanism. Still it had the Scriptures, and here, as everywhere, its privilege measures its responsibility. Hence there is a peculiar significance in the exhortation to remember and hold fast that which "thou hast received and heard." It is on the truth of God, delivered by the apostles and contained in the Scriptures, not on any Church traditions or authority, that the faithful are always cast back in times of weakness and difficulty.

The words that follow are solemn. "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come [on thee] as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (v. 3.) This coming "as a thief" is not the Lord's coming for His saints. Paul writes, "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day." (1 Thess. 5: 2-5.) The event therefore which overtakes the world as a thief in the night is not the coming of the Lord for His saints, but the coming of "the day of the Lord," which is always spoken of, not as a "blessed hope," but as a time of

fearful retribution and judgment. Believers of this dispensation will not be in the night which then broods over the world, but, as "the children of the day," will be with Christ; and will afterwards, when He comes to execute judgment, appear with Him in His own glory, as promised to the overcomer in Thyatira. This "sudden destruction" therefore falls upon no true member of the body of Christ, but only upon the world, including those false professors who are left behind when the Lord comes for His saints. The bulk of Sardis was in this state; and the bulk of those belonging to that condition of the Church which Sardis represents will be found in this state also. Real believers will be taken out of it to meet the Lord, but on the whole it will continue slumbering in fancied security until Christ comes upon it as a thief in the night, and it is overwhelmed with sudden destruction.

There is indeed a remnant, though small and feeble. "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." (v. 4.) The believer's place is "to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James. 1: 27.) The Church of Sardis, however, had so sunk to the world's level that it is even threatened with the world's judgment. The few that had been worthy, and kept their garments undefiled, shall walk with Christ in white. The blamelessness and holiness of their lives shall be publicly manifested.

This suggests the promise to the overcomer. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (vv. 5, 6.) The church of Sardis had become thoroughly worldly, professing to have life while really dead, and thus virtually denying Christ. The overcomer is contrasted with the assembly in these particulars. While it had become a worldly mass, he had kept himself "unspotted from the world;" and therefore the promise is that he "shall be clothed in white raiment." While the assembly had a name to live, but was dead, the overcomer was actually entitled to a place in "the book of life;" and hence the promise is that his name shall not be blotted out. Again, while the mere professors at Sardis had a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof, the overcomer had truly confessed Christ in the midst of the general apathy; and therefore the promise is given, "I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels."

Some have gathered from the words, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life," that a person once saved may afterwards be lost; others, that all persons originally have life, but some forfeit it by sin. Both deductions are at once destroyed by a glance at the connection. Sardis is a mass of lifeless profession. But the very fact of profession is a claim to know Jesus as a Saviour, or, in other words, a claim to have life. Now with regard to the professing believers in Sardis this claim was unfounded; they had a *name* to live, but were dead. Hence the Lord, according to the natural but significant figure, strikes their names out of the book. But the overcomer has a claim which the Lord admits, and therefore his name stands while the others are blotted out. One may compare it with the drawing up of a list of burgesses. Every dweller in the town may claim to be enrolled; all are entered in a book until the revisor sits, when the true claims are allowed to stand, while the fictitious or unsupported ones are struck off the roll. The former alone have the hearing ear, and to them alone the exhortation is addressed.

PHILADELPHIA.

(Rev. 3: 7-13).

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth." (v. 7). The Lord does not present Himself here in the same judicial character as in former epistles. He is the holy and the true, also the Messiah with the key of David. It would seem as if the question were not so much how far the church had met His requirements as a judge, but how far it corresponded with the demands of His own heart and nature. Now the believer is called upon to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Eph. 5: 24.) Holiness and truth therefore are the things which answer to the Lord's own heart; and hence He here reveals Himself as "He that is holy, He that is true."

But there is another character in which He shows Himself, suited to the weakness in which the church is here seen. He is the One to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, "He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." He is not indeed yet exercising this power in worldly government, but having been "made both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36), He now uses His lordship on behalf of the



feeble saints at Philadelphia to remove obstacles out of their way. "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." (v. 8.)

Here we have great feebleness, but the Lord himself sets before them an open door, so that there shall be no hindrance to the little strength they have. Still it is a day of small things. Philadelphia has little outwardly to show; but it has this, Thou "hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Of Pergamos it is said, "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." As to the name of Christ therefore, both were true. In the other matter the resemblance is not so close. Pergamos had not denied the *faith* of Christ. This is something, but far less than what is said of Philadelphia, that it had kept His *word*. Not to deny Christ's faith is to remain on Christian ground; but to keep Christ's word is his own test of love and condition of communion: "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14: 23.) The word, too, is that which cleanses and sanctifies: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15: 3); and again, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John 17: 17.) This fidelity to his word therefore suited the qualities for which Christ was looking as "He that is holy, He that is true."

Philadelphia, then, is distinguished as not denying Christ's name, and also for that obedience to His word which springs from love and ensures fellowship. This is the contrast between Philadelphia and Ephesus. In all outward things Ephesus excelled; it lacked love, but abounded in works. In all outward things Philadelphia was wanting; it lacked works, but abounded in love. This is what commends it to the Lord, who delights, not in the works, but in the affections of His people. No doubt where there is love there will also be, as at Thessalonica, the "labour of love;" but what the Lord values is the motive, not the result. So while the great works of the Ephesians are lowered in His estimation by the growing coolness of their love, the poor works of the Philadelphians are endeared to His heart by the truth of affection out of which they flowed. Only among them does He appear as One who shares their labours, holding before them an open door because of their little strength.

There is another feature in this church. In Ephesus and Smyrna we see an energy which judges evil, but in the next three churches this disappears. Pergamos endures

evil; Thyatira adopts it; Sardis is dead to it. But in Philadelphia, with little power, there is at least a moral repudiation of evil, which the Lord owns. "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not but do lie: behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." (v. 9.) The synagogue of Satan, as already said, is the return to Jewish principles, putting men under law, and restoring the hierarchy and ceremonial suited to an earthly religion like Judaism, but totally out of place in a heavenly religion like Christianity. This attempt to put the new wine into old bottles is denounced by Paul as destructive to the truth committed to his keeping. The danger from idolatry, seen in Pergamos and Thyatira is not found here; for in spiritual churches like Smyrna and Philadelphia such snares were too obvious, and Satan tries a subtler device. This spurious Judaism was more specious and equally fatal, and has always proved a formidable danger to Christendom. This, then, was what he attempted to introduce here, but the evil was clearly discerned by the faithful Philadelphian believers.

They not only saw it, however, but withstood it. At the time it would seem to have been too strong for them; but they are assured that soon all will be changed, the despised upholders of Christ's word vindicated, and the victorious corrupters of the truth humbled. "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow," and when He comes His people will come with Him. Then the oppressors of the truth will be compelled to bend before those who have faithfully held it in the teeth of their opposition, and to own that Christ has loved them.

This last expression is very beautiful here. It harmonizes with this epistle just as much as it contrasts with the others. There Christ is seen as Judge, and the expression of His affections would not be suitable; for what has a judge to do with love? Here, however, we see Him laying aside His judicial robes, and identifying Himself with His feeble people, dealing with them in His personal, not in His official, attributes, holding before them an open door, strengthening their faith by the assurance of victory, and finally telling them, and promising to display to their adversaries, how much He loves them. If the general character of the book is judicial, surely there is something most refreshing in this green spot in the midst of the wilderness.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the

earth." (v. 10.) This is a special promise made to the Church of Philadelphia. What, then, is the word of Christ's patience? Paul prays, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ." (2 Thess. 3: 5.) The patience of Christ is contrasted with His power. He will reign, but His reign has not yet begun. Till now He is waiting for the kingdom. The believer is called upon to wait with him, and so to share His patience. This is what the Philadelphians were doing, and for this they receive commendation.

Their reward was exemption "from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Scripture foretells a period in which there "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. 24: 21.) At that time Daniel's people, the Jews, "shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Dan. 12: 1.) So Jeremiah says, "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer. 30: 7.) The woes and trials of that day however are not confined to Jacob, for the Lord adds, that He will "make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee." (v. 11.) Besides the period too, when the misery reaches its dreadful climax, there are preliminary troubles, called the beginning of sorrows, in which "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places." (Matt. 24: 7.) All these events are included in the hour of temptation. This time will be marked also with a peculiar energy of evil – Satan working, through his agents, "with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2: 9, 10.) Such then is "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world."

There are two classes whose deliverance is named in connection with this hour. Daniel's people, who are "found written in the book," are "saved *out of* it." Those who keep the word of Christ's patience are saved *from* it. The godly remnant of the Jews will pass through "the furnace of affliction," and will there be "refined" and "chosen" (Isa. 48: 10), being finally saved by "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. 24: 30.) But the believer under the present dispensation will never enter this "hour of temptation." He looks not for "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," but to be caught up "to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thess. 4:

17.) When Christ comes to deliver His earthly people the heavenly saints will be with Him. This is at the close of the "hour of temptation:" but they will have been taken up to be with the Lord before the hour begins, and thus be delivered from its nameless woes and horrors.

Hence follows the promise of the Lord's speedy return. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (v. 11.) This text troubles some anxious souls, because it is supposed to show that a man may lose his place in Christ. But the crown is a reward, and there is surely a great difference between losing a reward and losing eternal life. Moreover, this book does not deal with the question of life, but of profession, and Scripture never assumes a man to be safe because he has made a profession. The end alone must prove it, because there may be profession, and even consistency of outward walk, where there is no life at all. Such expressions as these therefore in no way weaken the believer's safety in Christ, though they furnish a solemn warning against the abuse of this doctrine to let in carelessness of walk.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon Him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," (vv. 12, 13.) The frequent repetition of the words "my God" in this promise brings Christ's relationship with the believer into special prominence. When Christ in resurrection would give His brethren the same place with Himself, He sent to tell them, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to *my God* and your God" (John 20: 17.) And Paul quotes Christ's words, "I will put my trust in Him" (that is God), as showing that "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, . . . I will put my trust in Him." (Heb. 2: 11-13.) So, when asking that the believer may know God's power in quickening him together with Christ, he prays to "*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Eph. 1: 17.) The peculiar emphasis here given therefore to the words "my God" marks Christ's manhood, and His identification with these believers, showing that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

The promise is most full and blessed. The believer, despised and weak here, will have a place as a pillar a symbol of strength, in the temple of God. Holiness and truth have characterized him down here, and he shall

therefore dwell in the place which "holiness becometh" (Ps. 93: 5), and "shall go no more out." Again, there is peculiar nearness and consecration to God signified in the name of God being written on him. And he is specially identified with the heavenly things, the New Jerusalem, whose name he also bears. In the days of Christ's rule over the earth it will be the peculiar distinction of some to have been born in His city. "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her." (Ps. 87: 5.) The overcomer in Philadelphia will bear about him, not the name, however exalted, of the earthly Zion, but the name of the New Jerusalem, "the city of my God," which cometh down out of heaven. "And I will write upon him my new name." To write one's name on a person is a figure implying appropriation or adoption, and the idea therefore here conveyed is the special interest which Christ and His God have in the faithful believers at Philadelphia who have kept Christ's word, and not denied His name.

LAODICEA.

(Rev. 3: 14-22)

"And unto the angel of the church in Laodicea write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (v. 14.) here again the Lord presents Himself, not in His judicial, but in His moral attributes. He is "the Amen," "for all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor. 1: 20.) He is also "the faithful and true witness," for though the Church has failed as God's witness on earth, Christ still abides unchangeably faithful and true. Moreover, He is "the beginning of the creation of God," the head of that new creation of which the Church ought to have been the manifestation down here. The Church has utterly departed from God's thoughts in this as in all other respects, but Christ is still the same.

"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. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." (vv. 15-18.)

Such was the sad state of the church of Laodicea, such the sad picture of the professing Church in one of its last phases. There is not the gross corruption of Thyatira, nor the hopeless deadness of Sardis, but what is even more offensive to Christ, whose name is turned into a means of self-exaltation, instead of being an object of love. There is activity in the name of Christ, abundant works, abundant self-complacency, but heartless indifference to his person.

This grieves Him more than anything else, and it is against this that His sternest denunciations are directed. Only here does He speak of casting the Church out as too nauseous to be endured: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of my mouth." What solemn words! addressed not to a scandalously corrupt or languidly torpid church, but to a church where there was clearly much work done in Christ's name, together with large outward results. So satisfactory were these in its own estimation that it became blind to the truth, and was boasting of its wonderful success at the very moment when, in Christ's estimation, it lacked everything of real value.

It is counselled, therefore, to turn to Christ Himself, and to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich." Gold is the figure of God's righteousness, and the term "tried in the fire" refers to its perfect purity, rather than to any judgment by which it is refined, as the Psalmist says of the Lord's words, that they are "as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." (Ps. 12: 6.) White raiment is the clothing in which the believer is fitted to stand before God, instead of appearing in the filthy rags of his own righteousness. Man wishes to clothe himself in robes suitable to God's presence. Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together that the shame of their nakedness might not appear; and yet how useless they found them when called to stand before God. He gave them a garment by which their nakedness was really covered. So this church at Laodicea was clothing itself with works, and boasting of its success, while the Lord sees it to be naked, and endeavours to rouse its conscience to the fact, so that it might receive from Him the garments it really required. But its eyes were blinded with self-conceit, and it could not discern its need of such clothing. He therefore adds, "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." These self-satisfied professors lacked the very germs of spiritual life. Their eyes had never been opened to see their true condition as lost sinners. Consequently they did not know that they needed to be justified according to God's righteousness, and to stand

before Him in the only clothing suited to His presence – "in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1: 30.)

But amid all this lukewarmness, the Lord still has a few of his own people. For their sakes He deals sharply in discipline, and He calls on them for earnest repentance. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (v. 19.) The church as a whole is not called upon to repent. On it the sentence is not conditional, but absolute: "I will spue thee out of my mouth." But grace is always open to individuals, and to His own people the Lord never ceases to be faithful, however far they may have sunk into the coldness or carelessness of the religious profession around them. Here the saints, though true, had become infected with the lukewarmness which was so nauseous to Christ, and discipline was needed to awaken their consciences to the sad condition into which they were fallen.

And now comes a melancholy fact, accompanied by a blessed promise. From the church as a whole Christ is, so to speak, shut out. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (v. 20.) Christ is still the same. Though shut out, figuratively speaking, of the church, He still seeks a place in individual hearts. It has come now to be a matter of persons, not of churches, and "if *any man* hear my voice, and open the door," there is still rich blessing – the blessing of soul communion; the blessing of having Christ to dwell in the heart, in the closest fellowship of daily intercourse. "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This is a blessed promise suited to the circumstances of the faithful. What distinguishes this Church is heartless indifference to Christ. What distinguishes the overcomer is just the reverse; for in him is found love, expressed in obedience, which is the condition of Christ taking His abode in the heart.

"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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (vv. 21, 22.) Such is the promise to the overcomer in Laodicea. Some have supposed that it shows a peculiarly rich order of blessing. But this is a mistake. There is no special reward in this, for it is the common portion of all believers. Still there is here, as in other cases, a marked appropriateness. What distinguishes the faithful

in this church is, their individual association with Christ, and this character is retained in the promise to the overcomer. He had admitted Christ into his heart, and known Him in secret fellowship down here. His recompense is to be admitted to the portion of Christ in the kingdom and glory up there. Christ, as the overcomer, had been received up to sit on the Father's throne, the mark of the Father's approbation and love. The believer who has let Christ into his heart will, as an overcomer, be received up to sit on Christ's throne, the mark of Christ's approbation and love. To such, to the overcomers in the midst of the general lukewarmness, goes forth once more the gracious appeal: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

#### HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE CHURCHES.

And now let us pause to trace the remarkable coincidence between the history of Christendom, and the state of the churches in the order in which it is unfolded in these epistles. As Paul had predicted, failure soon began; and at the time this book was written first love had already cooled, and the germs of serious evil, both doctrinal and moral, were already sown. Still for a time evil teaching and practice were withstood, and there was much activity and zeal in labour. This is the state of things described in Ephesus.

Then came an era of bloody and cruel persecutions, breaking out at intervals through two centuries, during which period love and devotion were kindled, and noble instances of suffering for Christ's sake are recorded. Such is the phase of ecclesiastical history depicted in the church of Smyrna.

After this a disastrous change took place. The world no longer persecuted the Church, but patronized it. The Church, not suspecting the danger, settled down under its protection, "where Satan's seat is;" and then corruption and deadness rapidly set in. Devoted men, like Athanasius, still rose as champions of the truth; but the Church generally became worldly and careless, tolerating false doctrine and evil practices, like those here ascribed to the Nicolaitanes. This third stage in Church history is set forth in the epistle to the assembly at PERGAMOS.

Up to this time the Church, though already corrupted, retained at least so much truth and faithfulness that it could yet be owned of God, and therefore the exhortation to hear is still addressed to the whole professing body.



But henceforth this is no longer possible; for the next stage shows the Church in western Christendom, now wholly given up to worldliness and idolatry, beginning to claim supreme power over the kings of the earth. The pretensions and crimes of Rome, the mystical Jezebel, knew no bounds: There were still indeed devoted men, earnest missionaries, but the Church as a system was rotten to the core, false to Christ, entirely abandoned to worldly ambition and idolatrous practices. Amidst the general ruin however there were always individuals and small communities faithful to Christ, often unobserved by the world; and, when seen, generally brought into notice by the cruel persecutions they endured. But the Lord had his eye upon them, sustaining and encouraging them amidst their sufferings. These are "the rest in Thyatira." The evil condition of the Church as a whole lasted from the usurpation of temporal power by the Roman see down to the Reformation; and though since somewhat modified by events, is in principle the same yet. This is the phase in the Church's annals foreshadowed in the epistle to Thyatira.

Such is the main stream of ecclesiastical history from the decay of first love as seen at Ephesus to the last days of the Church on earth. But besides the main stream there are side channels diverging from it, and running along parallel with it to the end, the most important of which are treated of in the three following epistles. As these four phases all last to the coming of the Lord, this event is named in these epistles, but not in the first three. After the corruptions of Rome had become intolerable the Protestant Reformation arose to clear away, at least in part, the more scandalous evils, and to establish greater purity of doctrine and worship. Unhappily, after the first outburst of zeal, it soon degenerated into worldliness and torpor; and though not outwardly scandalous, it became heartless and dead. Of this state of things we have only too faithful a portrait in the epistle to the church at Sardis.

Still from time to time, amidst this hopeless apathy, the Lord has raised up a feeble few whose hearts sought to walk in obedience and faithfulness. These find their representatives in the church at Philadelphia.

But side by side with this is the self-satisfied religious activity which, while boasting of large results, is cold and indifferent towards Christ. This last phase is pictured in the church of Laodicea.

This is a solemn picture; but not more solemn than true. It is surely a deeply momentous question to ask ourselves, To which of these last four phases of the professing Church do we belong?

*PART SECOND*

PRELIMINARY JUDGMENTS

(Revelation 4: 1; 19: 4)

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GOD AND THE LAMB.

Revelation 4, 5.

We have now looked at "the things which are." The fourth chapter begins thus "After this [or rather, "after these things;" that is, "the things which are"] 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; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter [or "the things which must be after these"]." (v. 1.) The new things we now come to divide themselves into two portions — the judgments preparatory to Christ's coming and kingdom, and the coming and kingdom themselves. It is the first portion with which we are now concerned.

What then are these events? If "the things which are" only apply to the seven churches in Asia, "the things which must be after these" may begin from any time later than this book; and there is doubtless a certain correspondence between the outlines here given and some great events in subsequent history. But many prophecies have, first a general and partial fulfilment and afterwards a far more exact and complete one; and if "the things which are" be understood in their wider scope, as embracing the whole cycle of Church history, "the things which must be after these" will, of course, begin only when Church history ends.

Admitting a general truth in the first mode of interpretation, it seems probable, for reasons already given, that "the things which are," in their principal application, take in the entire duration of the Church on earth, and therefore that the prophecy of "the things which must be after these" has its more complete and precise fulfilment after the Church has ceased to exist down here. Nothing answering to the Church is seen on

earth during the judgments which follow, a fact quite inexplicable if these judgments occurred while the Church was still in the world. The names and titles in which God reveals Himself are also very different from those used in speaking of His relationship with the Church. So, too, Christ is here seen in quite another character from that in which He presented Himself to the seven churches in Asia; and, indeed, the whole scheme of the book from this point agrees far more with God's ways concerning the establishment of the Messianic kingdom than with His mode of acting during the present dispensation. The proofs of this will appear as we advance.

It may perhaps help to simplify this subject to those unacquainted with God's ways if we briefly sketch the order of coming events as taught in other portions of Scripture. Two great events are spoken of as before the Church and the world. These are the coming of the Lord *for* His saints, and the coming of the Lord *with* His saints. It is most important that the distinction, both of time and character, between these events should be carefully borne in mind.

The coming of the Lord *for* his saints is the present hope of the Church. When this happens, as it may at any time, all living and dead believers, from the foundation of the world, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The Church, as the body of Christ, consisting only of true believers, will then cease to exist on earth.

After the coming of the Lord *for* his saints, and before the coming *with* His saints, God will not be occupied, as now, in gathering out a people to be united with Christ in heaven, but in preparing the way for the establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom, and in making ready a people who shall receive Him as their earthly sovereign. These objects are both accomplished by means of sore judgments inflicted on the earth, judgments by which His enemies are punished and His people purified. "The hour of temptation," already spoken of, is the period during which these judgments are poured forth.

The coming of the Lord *with* His saints will take place at the end of this "hour of temptation," after the preliminary judgments have been brought to a close. It is the event described as "the coming of the Son of man," the coming of the day of the Lord, and the appearing of Christ. At this coming Christ will execute judgment on His enemies, deliver his chosen earthly people, and establish His dominion in righteousness over the world.

The interval between the coming of the Lord *for* His saints, and the coming of the Lord *with* His saints, or, in other words, between the taking away of the Church and the establishment of the kingdom, is, as already stated, a period of heavy judgments. During this time God and Christ are not acting in the same manner, or revealing themselves in the same character, as during the present dispensation. We shall see how, in the prophecies now to come before us, God's ways and titles harmonize with the character of this interval, and how completely they differ from the character of the present or Church dispensation.

The preliminary judgments detailed in this part of the book form several distinct groups, but before these are related the scene in heaven is opened to our gaze. There we are permitted to see things from God's point of view, to see the character in which He is acting, the purposes which He is bringing to accomplishment, and the secret springs which regulate the judgments hanging over the world. In these two chapters God is set forth, first in his rights and titles as Creator, dealing with the world which He has made; and next, in His sovereign prerogatives as Judge, committing all judgment to "the Man of His right hand, the Son of man whom He has made strong for Himself."

GOD AS CREATOR.

(Rev. 4.)

The first verse, already quoted, shows John summoned up through an opened door into heaven. The whole scene is changed. In spirit he is no longer in Patmos, hearing Christ's judicial estimate of the Church down here, but in heaven, beholding the development of events preparatory to His taking his earthly kingdom. This is the place from which the believer will look on during that "hour of temptation which will come upon all the world." John therefore is translated to the sphere of observation from which the Church will behold the judgments of that dreadful time. This surely suggests that the events which He describes are these judgments.

Why then, it may be asked, is nothing said about the rapture of the Church? Because in the Revelation the Church on earth is regarded, not in its privileges and hopes, but in its responsibilities and failure. Moreover prophecy is not a continuous narrative, but a succession of scenes often widely separated in time and circumstances. So it is here. The book reveals Christ

acting as judge. His judicial estimate of Christendom, or the professing Church, comes first; then follow His judgments poured forth upon the earth after the true Church, His body, has been removed. There is no room for the "blessed hope" in this scheme. We see that the Church, the whole body of real believers, is gone, but must learn from other Scriptures how it has been taken away.

"And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." (vv. 2, 3.) This is God seated on the throne. The jasper is called "a stone most precious" (Rev. 21: 11), and the idea suggested by both gems is that of dazzling glory. It is a session of judgment; for "out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices." (v. 5.) Still it is encircled with a rainbow, the token of God's "everlasting covenant" with creation. (Gen. 9: 16.) When Ezekiel beheld God about to give up Jerusalem to desolation, he saw "the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain." (Ezek. 1: 28.) So here, again, God shows that in judgment He remembers the covenant He has made with the earth. The emerald may be emblematic of the preciousness of the covenant in His sight, or its greenness may indicate the refreshing rest brought to the eye when wearied with the vision of the impending judgments.

Surely it brings cheer to the heart while traversing the dark gulf of gloom through which this book carries us, to look up and see that it is all spanned by the rainbow arch of God's unfailing covenant with the world. God will be glorified and Christ receive His rights even in this scene, and in this the believer's heart can rejoice. But the covenant indicated by the rainbow is a covenant with the world, not with the Church, and its appearance now in connection with the throne indicates that God is not acting in relationship with the Church, but with the world, where Israel is always the central object.

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats [or thrones]: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold." (v. 4.) Who are these elders? They are not angels; for in the next chapter the angels stand "round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders," singing quite a different hymn of praise from that in which the elders had previously joined. (Rev. 5: 11.) Their number is symbolic, and

clearly refers to the four and twenty courses of priests instituted by David. Their "white raiment" is the clothing promised to the overcomer, and afterwards used as emblematic of the "righteousness of saints." (Rev. 19; 8.) So, too, the thrones on which they are seated and the golden crowns they wear are both promised to believers; and their rank, as assessors with God in this scene of judgment, is suited to the saints who "shall judge the world." (1 Cor. 6: 2.) All this suggests that we have, under the figure of these elders, the class which raised the song before recorded, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto His God and Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1: 5, 6.)

Not only, then, have we no mention of the Church on earth, not only have we John looking down from the place whence believers will witness the judgments which follow the taking of the Church, but we have a company in heaven answering in every respect to the position which raised believers will occupy. Moreover the work in which God is here engaged – judgment qualified by the recollection of His covenant with the earth, corresponds, not with His present ways of grace, but with what is foretold of His acts when the day of grace is ended, and He resumes His dealings with the world preparatory to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. All this shows that the scene here is one which follows the coming of Christ for his saints, and that the elders in heaven represent believers who are then taken up and changed into His own likeness.

The throne and its surroundings are then described: "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal." Here the lightnings and thunderings show the throne to be a throne of judgment. The Spirit is seen in His manifold activity in judgment, symbolised by the "seven lamps of fire," in connection with the throne. The "sea of glass like unto crystal" typifies fixed purity, in contrast with the sea of water in the court of the temple. On earth there was need of purifying; in heaven there is not, so that the sea is no longer of water, but of crystal – that "terrible crystal," spotless purity of holiness, on which Ezekiel saw the throne of God standing. (Ezek. 1: 22, 26.)

But besides the lamps of fire and the sea of glass, "in the midst at the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts [or living creatures] full of eyes before and

behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf and the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures had each of them six wings; and they were full of eyes about and within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." (vv. 6-8.) These living creatures resemble in part the seraphim whom Isaiah saw above the throne of the Lord, having six wings, and crying, "Holy, holy, holy" (Isa. 6: 1-3); and in part the living creatures of Ezekiel's vision, where the same emblems, of the lion the ox, the man, and the eagle, also appear, and where the wheels which move with them, are "full of eyes round about." (Ezek. 1). They are "*in the midst* of the throne," as well as around it, seeming to show that they are rather symbols of God's ways in providence and judgment than separate beings. They are full of eyes, before and behind around and within, indicating perfect knowledge and intelligence. The man, the ox, the lion, and the eagle show the four chief types of the living creation in which God has displayed His power, and may perhaps also signify the intelligence, the utility, the power, and the swiftness of His judgments. In their wings we see the rapidity with which his purposes are carried out, while they are the unwearied proclaimers of that holiness which marks all His ways.

On both the occasions when these living creatures were formerly seen, God was acting in judgment. On both occasions the place of His appearance was the temple at Jerusalem. And on both occasions the declaration of His purposes concerning Israel, as the centre of His schemes of earthly government, was the object with which He thus revealed Himself. The glory in which He is here beheld is therefore a glory connected with Israel. Isaiah had been told that the desolation of Jerusalem was impending, and Ezekiel saw the glory quit the temple and city before the Gentile domination began. Afterwards, in the prophecy of the Messiah's reign, and the restoration of Jerusalem, the same glory, "even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city" (Ezek. 43: 3), returns and takes its abode in the rebuilt temple. All this shows that we have here the revelation of God's ways, not about the Church, or the present dispensation, but about Israel and the coming age, when God resumes the execution of His purposes concerning the government of the world.

The same thing is signified in the use of the title, "Lord God Almighty." These are names recalling God's covenants with Abraham and Israel, and relating to His



government of the world. They are used, as consistent with the general character of the book, in the first chapter. They are then entirely dropped during the addresses to the seven churches. After the close of these addresses they are resumed, and henceforth kept up to the close, showing that we have entered upon an epoch quite different from that of the Church.

The proclamation of God's holiness draws forth the worship of the elders. "And when those living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" [or "were and have been created"]. (vv. 9-11.) This is not worship addressed to the Father, but to the God of creation and providence. In this chapter Jesus is never separately named or seen. Yet in creation He is the person of the Godhead who actively works; for "all things were created by him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Col. 1: 16, 17.) It is not, then, the Father, as distinct from the Son, that is here the object of adoration, but God, the Creator, including Father, Son, and Spirit. All creature glory is merely derived, and the elders, though crowned, and even associated with God in judgment, fall down and worship the ever-living One, casting their crowns before the throne, and owning that He only is worthy of honour, glory, and power; for by Him and for Him all things exist and were created.

#### JUDGMENT COMMITTED TO CHRIST

(Rev. 5)

In the last chapter God was worshipped as Creator. We now see Him as "judge of the earth" committing "all judgment unto the Son," and giving "Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of man." (John 5: 22, 27.) "And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open [and to read] the book, neither to look thereon." (vv. 1-4.) God, as we have

seen, is resuming the execution of His counsels concerning the earth. The promises made to Abraham and to David, though temporarily suspended after the rejection of the Christ to whom they all pointed, are still in his thoughts; "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. 11: 29.) "The Man of His right hand," rejected in His humiliation, has been seated on the Father's throne, while the Spirit has been on earth gathering out a people to keep the word of His patience, and baptising them into one body with their glorified Head in heaven. This is Christ's place during the formation of the Church, and not until it is caught up to Himself does He rise from the Father's throne to commence the work of judgment.

But now this has taken place, and the saints, raised or translated at His coming, are seen under the figure of the elders seated in heaven. The time of Christ's patience is ended, the time of His kingdom approaching, and the judgments preceding the kingdom about to begin. God always designed to govern the world by a man. Adam, put in trust, failed in obedience, and ruined the whole creation. After this, sin having entered, the exercise of rule necessarily involved the execution of judgment. Hence the sword of government was entrusted to Noah. But he, too, proved unworthy, and became the object of mockery to his own son. Man's effort to establish government in independence of God was confounded at Babel, and each successive hand which received the government from God proved itself unworthy to carry out His judgments. Israel failed to execute His purposes upon the Canaanites; the judges failed to maintain His government in the land; Saul failed to carry out his command against Amalek; the house of David failed to meet his righteous requirements, till the nation, already divided, was given as a prey to the Gentiles. The Gentile monarchies all failed, and were set aside, till the last of the four powers crowned man's guilt by joining with God's own people in rejecting and crucifying the Messiah. "No man was found worthy." The scroll of God's judgments cannot be unfolded by man. Nay, man cannot even look upon it; for when God is dealing in judgment, whether at mount Sinai or in these coming woes, who is there that does not, like Moses, "exceedingly fear and quake"? The strong angel's proclamation remains unanswered. All human resources have been tried, and on all may be written the words which foretold the doom of the first Gentile monarchy. "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

But as in grace, so in government. When man's resources are exhausted, God's power enters the scene. Well might

John weep at the impotence of man to carry out the purposes of God; but God only waits till this has been fully demonstrated to bring forth the Man of His own counsels. "And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed [or overcome] to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." (v. 5.) Here, then, an elder, who knows the mind of God, heralds Christ as the One who is to take and open the book of judgment.

What all others have failed to do, He can and will do. For He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." The lion is a type of resistless strength, whether acting lawlessly or, as here, in the righteous execution of God's judgments, for "the King's wrath is as the roaring of a lion." (Prov. 19: 12.) Long ago the figure had been used of Israel - "Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." (Num 23: 24.) And of Judah especially it was said, "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" (Gen. 49: 9.) These prophecies are yet unfulfilled; for He who holds God's mighty power, symbolized by the lion, has not yet appeared in this character. He has been on earth as a lamb led to the slaughter, but not as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." This is the character however which He now takes. He is also "the Root of David," for it is from God's purposes concerning Him that all the glorious promises to David and his house are derived.

We have not here Christ's power and dignity as Son of God. Judgment is committed to Him "because He is the Son of man." (John 5: 27.) And not only so, but He owes His dominion to His humiliation unto death, because, "being in the form of God, He did not think it an object of rapine to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus" (His name as man) "every knee should bow, of things [or beings] in heaven, and beings in earth, and beings under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2: 6-11.)

Hence, although Christ is coming forth as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," the executor of God's judgments, and as "the root of David," the centre of His earthly

counsels, how does He appear? "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a *Lamb as it had been slain*, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." (v. 6.) While God's praises as Creator are celebrated, Christ is "in the midst of the throne" in his own essential glory – the glory of God. But when earthly government and judgment are in question, He stands forth in his derived human glory as the Lamb that had been slain. He is now clothed however with perfect power, as shown in the seven horns, and possesses perfect knowledge and wisdom, as symbolized in the seven eyes, "which are the seven Spirits of God." For Christ, as man, receives from the Spirit the knowledge and wisdom of God, and thus discerns everything throughout the whole earth.

As the slain Lamb, invested with authority to execute judgment, He receives His commission from God. "And He came and took [the book] out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne." (v. 7.) And now the homage to "the name of Jesus" begins. "And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed [us] to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made them [not us] unto our God kings and priests: and they [not we] shall reign on [or rather over] the earth." (vv. 8-10.) Here Christ is worshipped, not as God, but as the slain Lamb, because "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." According to the strict grammatical sense – which does not however always determine the meaning – it is only the elders who are said to have harps, and therefore we may conclude only the elders who raise this song. But however this may be, the four living creatures join in the adoration of the Lamb, falling down before Him in worship, thus signifying perhaps the fact that God's power in judgment, which they represent, is now placed in Christ's hands. The song is new, for though the merits of Christ's death are not new, the character in which He now appears, as the One who takes the book of God's judgment, and opens the seals thereof, is new. It is a character which He only assumes after the Church has been taken to heaven. The elders worship as priests. As a "royal priesthood" they celebrate on the harp "the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Peter 2: 9.) As heavenly priests too, in "the holiest of all,

which had the golden censer" (Heb. 9: 3, 4), they have "golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."

We have before seen that these elders represent the redeemed in heaven. Their song confirms this. If the words, "and hast redeemed *us* to God" were correct, the evidence would be still stronger. But though most manuscripts so read, the omission of "us" from a few copies is confirmed by the fact that in the next verse the reading undoubtedly is, "And have made *them* unto our God, kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth." The word "us," therefore, is doubtful. But still the whole song, being a celebration of Christ's work in redemption as entitling Him to take the book, naturally belongs to those who represent the redeemed. Who should be so interested in the fact that men were redeemed to God by His blood, were made kings and priests, or should reign over the earth, as the redeemed themselves? All these topics, so natural for them, are omitted from the angels' song, showing that these elders have a far deeper interest in the redeemed than the angels. A difficulty may arise from the words, "and they shall reign on the earth;" but the true reading is, "over the earth;" and while it is certainly never said that the heavenly saints shall dwell *on* the earth again, it is distinctly promised that when Christ reigns *over* the earth, they shall reign with Him.

The praise of the angels follows. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." (vv. 11, 12.) At the time here spoken of, the Psalmist's words are fast approaching their fulfilment: "Jehovah hath prepared His throne in the heavens; His kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103: 19); and even now "His angels that excel in strength," the "ministers of His that do His pleasure" bless Him in the person of "the Son of man," through whom His rule is carried on, and who is about to have all things put under His feet. (Ps. 8: 4-6.) But there is a great difference between this worship of the angels and that of the elders. The angels look at his "obedience unto death," and own that it is as the slain Lamb He is entitled to receive glory and blessing; but they say nothing about redemption. To them the central object in the cross is the perfect obedience there manifested; to the elders the central object in the cross is the redeeming work there accomplished.

But the chorus of praise does not stop here. The prophet's eye glances forward in vision to the universal adoration which will be rendered to the name of God and of the Lamb. The Psalmist knows nothing of throned elders in heaven, but he summons, not only angels, but all God's "works in all places of His dominion" to bless the Lord, (Ps. 103: 22.) And here in John's vision, after the songs of the elders and of the angels, the praises of creation also rise. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them [or, "all things in them"], heard I saying, Blessing, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped." (vv. 13, 14.) The words added in our version, "Him that liveth for ever and ever," are without authority, and spoil the passage. For the worship rendered to God in this chapter is not to God as Creator, or as the Eternal, but to God sitting upon the throne of judgment, and to Jesus as the slain Lamb, to whom the judgment is committed.

These two chapters, then, form the introduction to the judgments which follow the rapture of the Church, and usher in the day of the Lord. The present dispensation of grace having come to an end, God takes up again the thread of His schemes of earthly government, of which Christ is always the centre. He appears in the first chapter as Creator, about to assert His rights over the world He has made, and ever mindful of the covenant into which He entered with Noah. Here He is adored as Lord God Almighty, while Christ is not seen as separate from the glory of God, or as having any distinctive dignity as Son of man. In the next chapter, however, God is not presented as Creator, but as Judge, and then Christ appears as man, the One who had been "brought as a Lamb to the slaughter," but now stand forth armed with all God's power, as "the lion of the tribe of Judah" to avenge his chosen people, and as "the Root of David" to "judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." (Ps. 96: 13.) As such, the redeemed in heaven, the angels, and all creation, join to celebrate His praise. The worship of creation, indeed, is only anticipative, the prophet's gaze being carried on, in this, as in other cases, beyond the immediate present, to contemplate the glorious results which were to flow out of the sad scenes of judgment now about to commence.

#### THE SEALS.

Revelation 6: 1 to 8: 1.

The sealed book of judgment is now entrusted to Christ, and God begins to "do His work, His strange work, and bring to pass His act, His strange act." (Isa. 28: 21.) From the sixth to the close of the eleventh chapter the judgments follow each other in regular order. The first series are those brought in by the opening of the seven seals; the second, those heralded by the sounding of the seven trumpets. These two series of sevenfold judgments embrace the whole cycle of time, from the taking of the Church to be with Christ down to the beginning of His reign over the earth. After detailing these, the Spirit carries the seer back to witness some parts of the great tragedy more closely, especially God's dealings with Israel, the last phase of Gentile lawlessness, and the judgment executed on the great harlot that has committed fornication with the kings of the earth, and become drunk with the blood of saints. We shall first examine the judgments under the seven seals.

#### FIRST SEAL.

(Rev. 6: 1, 2.)

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four living creatures saying, Come [and see]. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer." One need hardly combat the thought that this rider is the Lord Jesus, and that His conquests are the triumphs of the gospel. No doubt Christ afterwards comes from heaven upon a white horse (Rev. 19: 11); but a white horse only symbolizes victorious power, and, like the lion, the throne, the crown, and other emblems, is used without regard to the moral character of those with whom it is connected. Christ is called a lion, and so is the devil. God has a throne, and so has Satan. Christ has many crowns, and so has the dragon. The mere figure then of a lion, a throne, or a crown proves nothing about the nature of the one of whom it is spoken. This must be learnt from the context. So with the white horse. We must ask what the surroundings show of him who sits upon it.

Looking, then, at this vision as referring to the past, how does it resemble the spread of the gospel? Where Christ afterwards sits on a white horse it is in judgment. Did the gospel go forth in judgment? Were not its preachers to share Christ's patience? And what is there of patience here? But again, this is entirely a scene of judgment. One of the living creatures

representing God in creation and judgment bids the prophet come, and bids him in a voice of thunder. How unlike a summons to witness the triumphs of God's grace! The events under the other seals are also manifestly judgments. Why then make this one seal to differ from all the rest in introducing blessing instead of judgment?

If we dismiss this strange misconception, the meaning is clear. As to the past, these six seals doubtless give a general sketch of the judgments on the earth, of the persecution of Christians, and lastly of the fall of the heathen Roman Empire. The future application is however much more important, showing that when God prepares to establish Christ's kingdom on earth the work of judgment commences. The first scene discloses a victorious warrior going forth on his career of conquest. He is armed with a bow, indicating the rapidity and wide range of his acquisitions. A crown is given him, showing probably that he is not originally of royal descent, but obtains imperial or royal dignity by his success as a warrior after the manner of the first Napoleon. This then is nothing more than a providential scourge, not perhaps more remarkable than others with which history teems.

#### SECOND SEAL.

(Verses 3, 4.)

"And when He had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, Come [and see]. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword." The rapid success of the conqueror under the first seal is followed by a further outbreak of war. The red horse, and the great sword given to the rider, are clearly symbolic of bloodshed. Peace quits the earth. "Nation rises against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." War and slaughter on a gigantic scale are indicated by this second seal.

#### THIRD SEAL.

(Verses 5, 6.)

"And when He had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come [and see]. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, A measure [choenix] of wheat for a penny [denarius], and three measures



[choenixes] of barley for a penny [denarius]; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." The black horse signifies mourning and consternation. Devastating wars have brought in famine. The "pair of balances" in the rider's hand recalls the prophecy of Ezekiel concerning the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's army: "I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment." (Ezek. 4: 16.) It is a figure eminently suggestive of scarcity. The prices given also imply extraordinary dearness of the commonest necessities of life; for it is calculated that they were about eight times the rate then current. This implies extreme suffering, not indeed among the rich, whose oil and wine are yet untouched, but among the poor, who find the cost of even the coarsest food, such as barley bread, almost beyond their reach.

#### FOURTH SEAL.

(Verses 7, 8.)

"And when I had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, Come [and see]. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell [or Hades] followed with him. And power was given unto them [or him] over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death [or pestilence], and with the beasts of the earth." This crowns the misery of these four preliminary judgments. Conquest leading to blood-shed and famine, has wrought wholesale desolation and wretchedness. The pale horse, significant of haggard want and despair, has Death as its rider. Hades, the unseen world, follows in his train, as if to devour his victims, according to the vivid imagery of the prophet: "Therefore Hades hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude and their pomp and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it." (Isa. 5: 14.) Death receives power over "the fourth part of the earth," there to descend with the "four sore judgments" of God – "the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence." (Ezek. 14: 21.) Lands ravaged by the sword; the wretched survivors left with wasted fields and resources to die of hunger and plague; wild beasts quitting their lairs, and prowling over the desolated country; such is a picture of the woes hanging, probably at no distant period, over this world. How blessed the portion of those who, having kept the word of Christ's patience, will be kept from this "hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world!"

Here, then, are the first judgments. There is, so far, no obvious intervention of divine power. Man's evil passions, which have stirred up wars and calamities in all ages, are the only instruments seen. But it is the first breath of that whirlwind of judgment which will soon sweep over the earth. Compare this with our Lord's own words about the signs of His "coming and of the end of the age." Addressing the disciples as representing those who will then be looking for Him, He says, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." (Matt. 24: 6-8.) Wars, famines, and pestilences, the contents of the first four seals are, therefore, the earlier judgments predicted by our Lord Himself, as among the signs of his coming in judgment at the end of the age. A further analogy will be found as we come to the next scene.

#### FIFTH SEAL.

(Verses 9-11.)

"And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Here, then, war, famine, and pestilence, are followed by persecution. Exactly the same thing is seen in the prophecy from which we have already quoted in Matthew. Our Lord proceeds: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all *the* nations [or, the Gentiles] for my name's sake. . . . And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all *the* nations" [or, Gentiles]. (vv. 9, 14.) To what period, then, does this persecution refer, and on whom does it fall?

Granting a general reference to the martyrdom of Christians under the heathen emperors, yet the agreement of this prophecy with Matthew shows that its chief fulfilment is in the troubles preceding the coming of the Son of man. Already, as we have seen, the redeemed of the

present and of past dispensations will be in heaven. Whence then are these martyrs? They must consist of those who have the word of God after the Church's departure. Does the description here given answer to this?

The Revelation says that these saints "were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." This might apply either to Christianity or to the testimony of believing Jews after the Church as taken. But in Matthew the Jewish character of the testimony is clear, for our Lord says, "Ye shall be hated of all *the* nations (or Gentiles) for my name's sake." The word "the," omitted in our translation, is important; for "the nations" is the phrase used to distinguish the Gentiles from the Jews. The Lord's prophecy is, therefore, that the believing Jews, who proclaim his word in those days, will encounter the hatred of the Gentiles. No marvel; for while the Gentiles are striving for power, and pushing their schemes of aggrandisement, as shown in the first four judgments, the believing Jews will be proclaiming, not a gospel of grace for mankind, but "the gospel of the kingdom," the coming of a Messiah who will subvert all earthly dominion, establish His throne in Zion, and exalt His people above all the nations of the world. What government would tolerate such preaching? What Gentile monarchy would not seek to crush the heralds of so revolutionary a faith?

This then is what will provoke the persecution. "The gospel of the kingdom" is a phrase never used of Christianity, but of the glad tidings of the Messianic kingdom, as foretold by John the Baptist and by our Lord Himself before the nation had rejected His claim. "This gospel of the kingdom" is to "be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the Gentiles," showing that it is the proclamation of the Messiah's kingdom to the nations of the earth.

In Luke's gospel, where the prophecy relates to the events preceding the destruction of the temple and city by the Roman army, "the gospel of the kingdom" is not named, and the persecution described is not said to be specially from the Gentiles, but from Jews and Gentiles alike. "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the *synagogues*, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake." (Luke 21: 12.) The difference is important, for it helps to show that the prophecy in Matthew relates, not to the events preceding the siege of Jerusalem, but to the woes and troubles preceding the day of the Lord, the same period as that spoken of in the book of Revelation.

The sufferers, then, under the fifth seal are slain after the Church is taken, and when God has resumed His purposes towards Israel. They have to do with a God of judgment, and cry that their blood may be avenged. How unsuitable such a prayer even in the mouths of those slain, until the time of judgment arrives. Those with Christ will surely keep the word of His patience as they did on earth. Could Stephen, who immediately before his death prayed for his murderers, cry, immediately after his death, for vengeance upon them? If not, these martyrs do not belong to the Church period, but to the period when Christ is risen up for judgment. They are of those elect whom God will speedily avenge, because they "cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them." (Luke 18: 7.) The Psalms are filled with their prayers: "Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail: let the Gentiles be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord; that the nations may know themselves to be but men." (Ps. 9: 19, 20.) And again, "Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man; seek out his wickedness till thou find none." (Ps. 10: 15.) This is not language for a Christian under persecution, but becomes those who are associated with Christ when the clays of His patience are over, and He is acting in judgment towards the world.

White robes are given them as tokens of Christ's approval. But they are still left as souls under the altar; not raised like the elders who are already perfected by the redemption of their bodies. There are other martyrs yet to die, and they must remain until these also have suffered.

#### SIXTH SEAL.

(Verses 12-17.)

"And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair; and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Of course this is not to be literally taken. Such a convulsion would be the total destruction of the universe, whereas the world exists long after these events. It is then a figurative description, borrowed from the magnificent prophecy of Joel concerning the events preceding the day of the Lord "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." (Joel 2: 30, 31.) A portion of the imagery is taken also from the words of Isaiah, describing "the indignation of the Lord upon all the nations" [or Gentiles], where he says, "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth from off the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." (Isa. 34: 2, 4.) These passages show not only the time and circumstances, but the proper interpretation of the figures used in the Revelation. The time is before the coming of "the great and terrible day of the Lord." The circumstances are God's judgment of the nations. The interpretation of the figures is the overthrow of the powers of the earth by great social and political convulsions. This is the meaning to be attached here to the "great earthquake." The sun, the supreme authority, is obscured, and the lesser powers, the moon and stars, are either disturbed or utterly overthrown. Places of strength and security, the mountains and islands, are removed; and a general shaking of all the kingdoms follows the wars that have raged, and the wretchedness and anarchy they have brought in their train.

This vast disruption fills all hearts with dismay. Christ's return in judgment had been foretold; and though the world then scoffed, this wide-spread overthrow recalls the prophecy, and a shudder of coming judgment seizes the people. There is no repentance, no cry for mercy, merely a terror of vengeance, and a frantic desire to escape shown by their calling on the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the dreaded wrath. But their horror is premature. The judgments preceding the great day of wrath have begun; but not the day itself. Man will be allowed to go on a little longer in his sin to show that this fear does not change his heart, but that with him, as with Pharaoh, each judgment, when passed, only increases its desperate hardness.

There is something fearful in the thought of a world crying out to be sheltered "from the wrath of the Lamb," the wrath of the meek and lowly One, who "was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." But

it is a solemn truth. The same voice which now says, "Come unto me," will, if His tender invitations are refused, at length say, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Now is the day of salvation; then will be the day of judgment; and surely every shaft of judgment will be barbed by the memory of slighted grace.

#### INTERVAL BETWEEN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH SEAL.

(Rev. 7.)

After the sixth seal comes a pause, during which we see a faithful remnant who are saved on earth, as we have already seen one saved for heaven. This remnant consists of two companies; first, a definite number from Israel; and next, a countless multitude from the nations.

I. We see the saved remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel (vv. 1-8): "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." (vv. 1-3.)

The "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth" are the ministers of God's judgments, occupying even the remotest regions of the world. The "four winds of the earth" are those disturbing elements existing in all quarters, which God can at His will let loose in judgment. Thus Gog, the great hostile hewer named in Ezekiel, is said to "ascend and come like a storm" (Ezek. 38: 9); and Jehovah, when delivering Israel from her enemies, is described "as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." (Isa. 32: 2.)

What, then, is signified by the earth, the sea, and the trees? The earth in Scripture is used for the nations under settled, stable government; while the sea is a figure naturally suggestive of multitudes, especially of people in a disorganized condition. Thus among the few symbols explained in this book we read that "the waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." (Rev. 17: 15.) In another chapter the last Gentile monarchy is described as rising "up out of the sea" (Rev. 13: 1); and in Daniel all the four beasts which represent the four Gentile

powers come out of a weltering scene of confusion and anarchy, where "the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea." (Dan. 7: 2.) The figure is in frequent use, as where the Psalmist speaks of the Lord as stilling "the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people." (Ps. 65: 7.) A tree, on the other hand, is a well known Scripture figure of a great one of the earth: "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan." (Isa. 2: 12, 13.) The meaning of the imagery therefore is, that God is about, through his providential agents, the angels, to let loose various elements of social convulsion on the nations under settled government, the troubled mass of the peoples, and the great ones of the earth.

But before this vast upheaving begins God remembers His elect, and provides for their safety. For their deliverance an angel ascends "from the east." The east is the quarter of the sunrise, and how will God's elect then be occupied? They will be looking for "the Sun of righteousness to arise with healing in His wings." (Mal. 4: 2.) In our dispensation the believer is to look to the east, to have his eye fixed on the "bright and morning star," the herald of the coming day. In the time described in this scene the east is still the quarter of hope, and though the Lord himself does not yet appear for His people's deliverance, His angel ascends to mark them in the forehead with "the seal of the living God." This is not "the Holy Spirit of God" sealing "unto the day of redemption." (Eph. 4: 30.) The Spirit will not then be given as now but the angel, one of those "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1: 14), sets the seal of the *living* God, the pledge of life and deliverance, in their forehead. It is as "the *Son* of the living God" that Christ builds a church secure against the power of hades. It is as sealed by the *living* God that these later saints will be secure against the power of death. The shafts of death and hades glance harmlessly aside from those who are protected behind the shield of "the *living* God."

"And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were

sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand." (vv. 4-8.)

Here the number is clearly symbolic, twelve being the number of administrative perfection, as seven is of mystical or heavenly perfection. Thus there are twelve patriarchs, twelve apostles, and here twelve thousand sealed from each of twelve tribes. Why the tribe of Dan is omitted can only be conjectured. It is not because the tribe is cut off; for in the new division of the land foretold by Ezekiel Dan occupies the northernmost portion. (Ezek. 48: 1.) Looked at historically, this remnant doubtless represents the Israelite believers in the early Church; but the historical fulfilment is, as we have seen, only a subordinate one, and the main scope of this prophecy is still future. What therefore we here learn is, that before the woes about to fall on the earth after the sixth seal, a remnant out of the twelve tribes of Israel will be specially marked out by God for deliverance.

II. But besides this sealed multitude from Israel, we see another countless throng of Gentiles, also reserved for blessing. (vv. 9-17.) "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (vv. 9, 10) This multitude are "clothed with white robes," the symbols of righteousness, and "have palms in their hands," the symbols of victory. Their song ascribing deliverance to "God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," is very different from the praise of the Church - "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood;" and from the song of the elders in proclaiming the worthiness of Him who was "slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred." These victors say nothing of the blood or redemption, but merely ascribe salvation to God on His throne, and to the Lamb. Yet we afterwards see that they had "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Whence, then, the silence on this subject in their outburst of praise?

It arises from their circumstances. The throne before



which they stand is not one of mercy, but of righteousness, and the Lamb is here seen, not as slain for sin, but as executing judgment. As the souls under the altar prayed that their blood might be avenged, so these saints have been crying for deliverance by the judgment of their adversaries. Christ's coming is to them deliverance from earthly tribulation and establishment in earthly blessing. The prophet's eye looks forward to the complete result when their praise ascends to God and to the Lamb, as having thus intervened for their salvation. The grace of God in giving His Son, or the love of Christ in redeeming them with His blood, is not here the subject of their thoughts, but rather the delivering might which has interposed in judgment on their behalf. This is the constant theme of the Psalms. "Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them. Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength; so will we sing and praise thy power." (Ps. 21: 12, 13.)

The angels' response to the cry of this multitude is in a like strain. "And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." (vv. 11, 12.) Comparing this with the song of the angels in chapter 5, we no longer find "the Lamb that was slain" to be the prominent object. No doubt Christ as man takes the kingdom by this title. Here, however, the subject is not the title, but the fact. The angels give praise that God's kingdom is at length established in manifest power and glory, while the deliverance thus wrought is the subject of thanks to the palm-bearing multitude.

But the true character of this scene unfolds as we advance: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (vv. 13, 14) These victors, then, are persons who have come out, not merely of "great tribulation," but of "*the* great tribulation." Now "*the* great tribulation" which is the true reading, is an era as definite as the day of the Lord, or any other clearly-marked Scripture epoch. It is the period mentioned in passages already quoted from Jeremiah, who calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble," and declares that "he shall be saved out of it;" the period spoken of by Daniel, who says it is a "time of trouble, such as never

was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book;" the period named by our Lord Himself, who also emphasises its unparalleled character.

This is "the great tribulation out of which these Gentile victors come; for the sorrows, though having their focus among the Jews, reach out to "all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Whatever secondary application therefore this prophecy may have to the Church in the early period of persecution, its principal reference is to another and very different class of sufferers. The Church will never enter into the "hour of temptation." These, then, are believers existing on earth after the Church is taken, and looking for the coming Messiah. Though not of Israel, they trust the word specially spoken of that day, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered." (Joel 2: 32.) They have therefore "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Now why is "the great tribulation" named here? And why are we shown a vision of those who pass victoriously through it? The introduction of such a subject would be wholly unmeaning if it were not that the narrative has now brought us to the very verge of this dreadful epoch. The judgments described under the first six seals are providential visitations of a terrible nature, but they are only the beginning of sorrows." The heavier judgments attending "the great tribulation" are about to commence, and two things are therefore first displayed. The one is the sealing of a definite symbolic number from the twelve tribes of Israel, showing that they shall still be preserved, and preserved in administrative perfection, through all these impending judgments. The other is a vision from which we learn that a countless multitude of Gentiles will also pass victoriously through this period, and be dignified with special marks of God's favour.

Everything here agrees with God's ways of dealing with the world after the Church is taken. The distinctive blessing of the Church is, that it does not come into the great tribulation; while the blessing of those here named is that they come victoriously out of it. Their praise, too, is quite different from that of the Church, referring, not to redemption through Christ's blood, but to salvation through His power. It is the acclamation of persons delivered, not from their sins, but from their oppressors. Besides, while the Church consisted of a remnant of Israel, together with saved Gentiles, they

were, when once converted, "baptized by one Spirit into one body," and formed in Christ "one new man;" whereas nothing is more marked in this scene than the prominence given to Israel, and the difference between God's ways towards these tribes and towards the Gentiles. The hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed beforehand as the special objects of God's case; the others only appear at the close, when the marks of victory are seen upon them. This is natural; for in the judgments preparatory to the Messianic kingdom Israel will be the peculiar object of God's counsels and love. That they should be sealed before the judgments is therefore quite consistent with the principles on which he will then be acting, while it is also consistent that multitudes of Gentiles will be saved though not thus specially distinguished.

But some may think that, since this multitude stand "before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," they must be in heaven, instead of being a saved remnant on earth. We must remember, however, that the scene is symbolic, and so regarded it is quite consistent with their being in the world. If it is on earth that they wash their robes, and make them white, why should it not be on earth that they wear them? If they are conquerors on earth, why should they not carry their palms on earth also? The multitudes in heaven are said to stand "around the throne," but these are said to stand "before" it. This position does not imply that they are in heaven. During Christ's reign God will have His earthly throne, and Christ's glory will be manifested on earth. Even now believers can "come boldly unto the throne of grace" without being in heaven, and surely similar language might be used about God's people when His presence is vouchsafed to them as it will be at that time. Standing "before the throne and before the Lamb" may therefore only mean special nearness of access to God, such as Moses enjoyed, in the way in which He will then be approached.

The association in which they are placed also favours this conclusion. The sealed thousands of Israel are manifestly delivered, and reserved for earthly blessing; for the object of their sealing is that they may be uninjured by the judgments. Now though the Gentile multitude is separately named, yet its association with the Israelites shows that it forms an outer circle to this sealed remnant, sharing the same kind of salvation. Indeed the words, "came out of the great tribulation," can only refer to persons brought through it, not to those falling in it; for deliverance from this time always means escaping with life, not suffering death.

Moreover, in the case of the souls under the altar, and those afterwards slain by the beast, their martyrdom is distinctly mentioned, and they are presently seen as living and reigning with Christ, and having "part in the first resurrection" (Rev. 20: 4-6), whereas nothing of the sort is spoken about this white-robed multitude. And surely if they had joined the elders and the angels in heaven something would be said to show their presence. But the company in heaven is just the same in this chapter as before; nothing indicates that a fresh multitude has entered.

This countless number of Gentiles, then, represents those who have, during the great tribulation, believed on the coming Messiah, and at length, after severe sufferings, escaped with their lives. Their reward is then told. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among [or rather, "tabernacle over"] them." (v. 15.) This does not mean that they are in heaven. The aged Anna "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." (Luke 2: 37.) The longing of the godly remnant to dwell in God's temple is constantly expressed in the Psalms. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." (Ps. 84: 1, 2.) This blessing therefore is strictly in accordance with the longings of the saints during the millennial age.

Believers in heaven dwell in the Father's house, or with Christ but it could hardly be said that God tabernacled over them. This He did, however, in the pillar of cloud in the wilderness; and this He will do when He shall "create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: and over all the glory shall be a covering. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." (Isa. 4: 5, 6.) Thus the blessings which these multitudes enjoy are those promised to the millennial earth.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (vv. 16, 17.) These are blessed promises, but promises fitted for an earthly rather than a heavenly people. In the eternal state "God shall wipe away all

tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." (Rev. 21: 4.) Then tears and sorrow, pain and death, are all done away, while the blessings of the Gentile multitude are rather exemption from trouble and protection from evil. They shall neither hunger nor thirst. To an earthly people just rescued from suffering, but still in the scene of their privations, this promise is most gracious, but how little appropriate to those dwelling in the Father's house.

These blessings too are those promised to the earthly people during Christ's reign. For He will come and "say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. *They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them* for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, *even by the springs of water* shall He guide them." (Isa. 49: 9, 10.) This is not a prophecy about heaven, but about restored Israel; for it goes on to declare, "I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh," and concludes by saying that "all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." (v. 26.) And though these blessings are promised to Israel, the same prophecy shows us also a Gentile remnant, who share, at least in part, the same portion. "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (v. 6.)

Again, speaking of the time "when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously," it is said that "He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God *will wipe away tears from off all faces*; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth." (Isa. 24: 23, 25: 7, 8.) The time then at which this prophecy in the Revelation receives its fulfilment is neither during the Church period, nor in the eternal state; and the place is not in heaven. It is a prophecy about people on the earth during that blessed age when Christ, having judged his enemies, will reign in righteousness and peace over the nations of the world. Looking back then on this and the previous chapter, we see the connection and meaning. The first six seals record the earlier judgments following the rapture of the Church.

After these "the great tribulation" is about to begin. At this moment God remembers His elect of Israel, and the judgment is stayed, figuratively, till these are sealed for deliverance. But His grace includes also multitudes of Gentiles. These indeed, not being then His peculiar object, are not sealed like the Israelites; but the vision, passing forward to the close of the tribulation, displays them robed in white, and with palms of victory, enjoying the nearest access to God, and in the fullest enjoyment of His care and favour during the period of the Messiah's reign. This interval therefore is not, as some have supposed, an interruption in the orderly development of events. It marks the conclusion of the lighter judgments recorded under the first six seals, and shows God's gracious care of His elect during the heavier judgments that are yet to follow. Or if we compare this book with our Lord's prophecy in Matt. 25, it marts the division between the "beginning of sorrows," named in the first verses, and the "great tribulation," foretold later in the discourse.

#### SEVENTH SEAL.

(Rev. 13: 1.)

"And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour." The prophecy then goes on, "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets." (v. 2.) Some have thought that the seventh seal inaugurates the reign of Christ, and that the seven trumpets refer back to another set of previous judgments. The text however, both by its silence and its words, points to an opposite conclusion. It makes no mention, expressly or by implication, of the reign of Christ having come. On the other hand, the apparition of the trumpet angels seems to be just as much the development of the seventh seal as the apparition of the warrior on the white horse was the development of the first seal. The solemn preparations in the interval after the sixth seal appear to show that the opening of the seventh seal must be followed by very great results, and it is clear that the half-hour's silence in heaven is no adequate fulfilment of such expectations. Yet no other result is stated, unless the appearance of the seven angels is so regarded.

This then seems to be the natural sequence, and indeed the only sequence which the text admits. From the opening of the first seal to the sounding of the last trumpet is one consecutive series of events. The first six seals

disclose a number of judgments preceding the great tribulation. The drama then pauses while God declares His purpose of saving a multitude, both from Israel and from the Gentiles, amidst the sorrows of this dreadful time. After this announcement the tragedy proceeds. The last seal is opened, and the response is the appearance of the seven angels to whom the trumpets are given. As these trumpets are successively sounded the various judgments of the great tribulation are unfolded. The opening of the seventh seal is therefore a most momentous event, and its deep solemnity is marked by the brief, but impressive, silence in heaven. At the sounding of the last trumpet, which really does introduce the reign of Christ, there are "great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" The "silence in heaven" is as appropriate to the opening of the seventh seal as the "great voices in heaven" are appropriate to the sounding of the seventh trumpet. For while the last seal inaugurates the age of the world's supreme suffering, the last trumpet inaugurates the age of its supreme blessing.

We now come therefore to the second and heavier series of judgments heralded by the angels with trumpets.

#### THE TRUMPETS.

Revelation 8: 2 to 11: 18

The solemn silence in heaven which follows the opening of the seventh seal is succeeded by a vision of seven angels. "And I saw seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets." (Rev. 8: 2.) The sound of a trumpet is a familiar figure in Scripture. It was the loud sound of a trumpet that accompanied the thunderings, and lightnings, and the thick cloud at the giving of the law, when "mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire." (Exod. 19: 18.) No more fitting symbol, then, could herald the dreadful judgments that are now to follow.

But before these begin a new form appears. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into [or unto] the earth and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an

earthquake." (vv. 3-5.)

Who is this angel? It should be noted that during the trumpet judgments, "the Lamb" is never named. This section of the book is distinguished by the exclusive action of angels. Now in dealing with Israel God not unfrequently presents Himself in angelic form. Thus in the burning bush it is sometimes Jehovah that is said to be seen, and sometimes His angel. So in Isaiah it is said, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." (Isa. 63: 9.) In Malachi Christ's coming is similarly described: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger [or angel] of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith Jehovah of hosts. But who shall abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." (Mal. 3: 1, 2.) It is then in this character, as the angel of the covenant, that He will be looked for by the faithful remnant during the time of the great tribulation. It is a form characteristic of His relationship with Israel, especially at that period, when, though again mindful of His covenant with them, He has not yet manifested Himself as their Saviour and Messiah. But it is not a form in which He never has to do with the Church. In the passage before us it is probable that the angel is Christ, who, though not yet publicly entering into relationship with His people, still, by His work of intercession on their behalf, saves and sustains them in the midst of their sorrows.

They are, indeed, in sore distress. The sealed remnant of Israel, named in the last chapter, are now about to be cast into the sevenfold furnace of the great tribulation. Already the cry is ascending from many a heart, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Jehovah? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" (Ps. 13; 1) Already a remnant of Israel are praying, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let Him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed." (Ps. 74: 9, 10.) The time of their deliverance is not yet come, but their groans and cries for judgment on their adversaries are heard.

Their prayers are presented before God by the angel, probably Christ Himself with "much incense." The incense burnt on the golden altar at the time of prayer (Luke 1: 10) symbolised the perfect acceptance of Christ giving



efficacy to the people's petitions. So in this figurative scene. The altar stands before the throne, not here the mercy-seat, but the throne of judgment; and from this golden altar of incense, the prayers of the remnant for deliverance and judgment rise to God, perfumed with all the fragrance of Christ, and draw down a speedy answer.

Burning coals from the altar – not now the golden altar of intercession, but the brazen altar of judgment, where the consuming fire of God's righteousness continually burns – are put into the censer, and cast down upon the earth. How unsuited to God's present ways of grace! How suited to the coming day of judgment, and the then circumstances of His oppressed and suffering saints! From the very censer in which the prayers of the saints are offered, and, therefore, harmonising in character with them, the fire of God's righteous judgment is hurled down upon the earth, and at the same time "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake" mark his indignation. Voices, and thunderings, and lightnings had issued from the throne before, but the earthquake is an additional feature, inaugurating the most disastrous scenes in that overturning which will go on till He come whose right it is to take the diadem and reign. Then follow the trumpets. "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." (v. 6.)

FIRST TRUMPET.

(Verse 7.)

"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 the earth was burnt up] and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." This is, of course, figurative. The judgments, restrained in the last chapter, are now let loose, and the earth, the sea, and the trees, are all visited with the pent-up tempests of wrath that are poured out upon them. Hail is used elsewhere as a symbol of sweeping desolation: "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which *as a tempest of hail* and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand." (Isa. 28: 2.) And of this very time it is written, "The *hail* shall sweep away the refuge of lies." (v. 17.) Fire is another well-known symbol of judgment. In the plagues of Egypt, from which many of these figures are borrowed, the two are combined. "And the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground." (Exod. 9: 23.) Here the hail and fire are "mingled with blood,"

showing that the judgments symbolised are destructive of life.

The consequences are terrible. "The third part of the earth was burnt up" – for this is in the best manuscripts – shows destructive judgment over a third part of the ordered, civilized nations of the world. "The third part of trees" signifies, as already shown, the great ones of the earth. The burning up of "all green grass" may refer to the withering of the means of support; or, if grass is here used as a figure of man in his frailty, it indicates a destruction of the choicest and most vigorous portion of the human race, such as the wholesale slaughter of young men called out to serve in war.

SECOND TRUMPET.

(Verses 8, 9.)

"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed." Here again Scripture itself furnishes the key to this vivid symbolism: "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith Jehovah, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain." (Jer. 51: 25.) Such was the doom pronounced upon the city and empire of Babylon. The "great mountain burning with fire" then is some powerful state, which, becoming itself ablaze with revolutionary passions, falls, as it were, like a conflagration among the mass of the peoples represented by the sea, causing frightful wars, immense loss of life, and wide-spread ruin of commerce, all strikingly pictured by the sea turned into blood, the living creatures killed, and the ships destroyed. The scene may be illustrated by the great French Revolution, when the powerful kingdom of the Bourbons became a living crater of anarchical frenzy, kindling the whole of Europe into flame, and belching forth for a quarter of a century bloodshed, misery, and ruin over every quarter of the globe.

THIRD TRUMPET.

(Verses 10, 11.)

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great turning as it were a star from heaven, burning as it were

a lamp [or torch], 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." This figure signifies some person in high, though subordinate, authority, who, falling from his place, corrupts and poisons the very springs of life. It appears not to be so much a political as a spiritual apostacy, diffusing some deadly falsehood, which works like a poison in the heart and conscience, producing moral rather than physical death. Such is the figure used by Moses to describe the bitter fruits of idolatry among the Israelites, who are warned, "lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from Jehovah our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." (Deut. 29: 18.) We may illustrate the state of things from history by referring to the fearful spread of infidelity that accompanied the revolutionary outbreak already named.

#### FOURTH TRUMPET.

(Verses 12, 13.)

"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise." The sun symbolizes supreme, the moon derived, and the stars subordinate, authority. Thus in Joseph's dream Jacob, the head of the family, his wife, and his eleven sons, all heads of families, but still subordinate to their father, are represented by "the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars." (Gen. 37: 9.) What is foreshadowed here therefore is a general collapse of government over a third part of the earth, all authority, high and low, supreme and subordinate, being, as it were, obscured throughout this region. A somewhat similar figure is used to express the abasing of all other powers during the millennial reign: "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." (Isa. 24: 23.) In this passage, however, it is the paling of earthly authorities before the brightness of Jehovah's kingdom, while in the Revelation it is their prostration before the hurricane of judgment then sweeping over the earth.

It will be observed that in all the first four trumpets the judgment falls on a "third part" of the earth, the sea, or whatever else is its subject. It is said of the dragon that "his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." (Rev. 12: 4.) Now the chief seat of the dragon's rule, as we shall see, is the revived Roman Empire, to whose last head he gives "his power, and his throne, and great authority." (Rev. 13: 2.) This has led some to think that the third part of the earth named in the trumpet scenes is the re-established Roman Empire; but whatever the fraction may mean, it is probable that the judgments here portrayed do fall, at least to a great extent, on this part of the world. There it is that the light of the gospel has shone with the clearest lustre, and been quenched in the deepest night. There it is that the great apostacy figured by Babylon has had its seat. There it will be that, after the true Church is taken, men will be given up to "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 1: 11, 12.) There too it will be that the last head of the Gentile powers will raise himself in impious rebellion against "the King of kings," and gather his armies for "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Nothing is more likely therefore, morally speaking, than that the heaviest blows of judgment will fall on this part of the world, and more especially that deadly delusion symbolized in the plague of the bitter waters.

The trumpets are clearly divided into two classes. The first four, which we have already looked at, have a somewhat common character; the other three are of an entirely different kind, and are distinguished as "woe trumpets." They are preceded by a proclamation foretelling their solemn and dreadful burden "And I beheld, and heard an eagle [not 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 phrases "inhabitants of the earth," and "they that dwell upon the earth," which are only different translations of the same word, occur several times in this book. They seem to regard the earth as the scene, not only of man's residence, but of his hopes and affections; and thus to imply a moral character, like that which Paul bewails among professing believers, "whose glory is in their shame; who mind *earthly things*." On these "inhabitants of the earth" judgment is about to fall, the eagle by which the woes are announced probably signifying the swiftness with which the blows will descend; for "when they shall say,

Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh." When God begins in judgment, it is "a short work" that He "will make upon the earth."

#### FIFTH TRUMPET.

(Rev. 9: 1-12.)

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit." (vv. 1, 2.) This and the next woe are marked by their manifestly Satanic character. The fall of a star is, as before, the apostacy of some great, but subordinate, power, only here it is plainly not an earthly power, but one of the principalities and powers who rule the darkness of this world, one of the wicked spirits in heavenly places. To this baleful star is given permission to let loose infernal darkness and torment on the earth. He has "the key of the pit of the abyss," the unfathomable or bottomless pit, in which evil is restrained before receiving its final doom. It is here that "the spirits in prison" are confined (1 Peter 3: 19); here that Satan will be shut up for a thousand years before his last rebellion and everlasting punishment (Rev. 10: 1-3); here that the angels who sinned are "delivered into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." (2 Peter 2: 4.) It is to this abode that the demons dreaded they would be sent when they besought Jesus, "that He would not command them to go out into the abyss," or deep. (Luke 8: 31.) And now from this gloomy prison-house rolls forth a dense volume of smoke, blinding the heart to God's light, and polluting all healthy influences, as figured by the darkening of "the sun and the air."

But this is not all. Direct demoniacal power is let loose. "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." (vv. 3-6.) The figure of locusts is probably taken from

the prophecy of Joel, where they are called the Lord's "great army," and where their ravages are magnificently described. They are a scourge equally known and dreaded in eastern lands. The air is darkened by their vast numbers as they approach, and no green thing escapes their voracity. Their overwhelming hosts and man's utter helplessness before them seem to be the features here specially alluded to, for their action is quite different from real locusts, which inflict no torment on man, and destroy the grass and foliage which these creatures are forbidden to touch.

While resembling locusts in their overwhelming numbers and power, they have stings like scorpions, and so dreadful is their torment that men desire death. Death however "shall flee from them," for this is not a plague of slaughter and ravage, but only of intense suffering. The persons injured are "only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." Since, then, the sealing was not for the Gentiles, but merely for a select number from the twelve tribes, we may infer that it is only the reprobate portion of Israel who are subjected to the fearful, though not fatal, anguish inflicted by this army of tormentors from the, bottomless pit.

The nature of these locusts is then described: "And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings; and in their tails was their power to hurt men five months. 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." (vv. 7-11.) It may be admitted that historically this foreshadows the swarms who overran the East under the diabolical inspiration of Mahomet, and much ingenuity has been shown in tracing minute points of resemblance between the Arab hordes and these mystical locusts. But that this is only a secondary and far from complete fulfilment of the prophecy is clear, from the fact that while the Mahometan conquests were carried on with great bloodshed, these locusts are expressly stated not to inflict death. The main application is, therefore, to something quite different, and still future. When the event occurs the coincidences between the fact and the prediction will be evident to the eye of faith, not microscopic resemblances, which can only be detected by

minute antiquarian research.

In the description of the locusts certain moral features are probably delineated. Resistless fury and show of power would seem to be indicated in the war horses and crowns; the appearance of boldness and independence, with real weakness and subjection, in the faces of men with the hair of women; destructive violence in the teeth of lions, and a conscience steeled against pity and remorse in the breastplates of iron, while their progress causes a mighty commotion like war-chariots hastening to battle. The injury they inflict is with their tails, alluding probably to the words of Isaiah, "The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." (Isa. 9: 15.) Such explanations of the symbols are suggested; but without professing to unravel all the details of this mystical prophecy, we may discern its general character. It is not a material, but a moral plague, that the followers of Apollyon, "the destroyer," inflict. The locusts leave behind them a spiritual desert, the scorpions inflict their torment on the heart and conscience, but there is no destruction of physical life. The ravages of the infernal host are confined to the unbelieving Israelites, and are limited in duration, as indicated by the term of five months.

Such, then, is the first of the three "woe trumpets." Proclamation is made, "One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter" [or after these]. (v. 12.)

#### SIXTH TRUMPET.

(Verses 13-21.)

"And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates." (vv. 13, 14.) "The golden altar" is the altar of incense or intercession, which stood, though separated by the vail, before the throne of grace or mercy seat. In the figure it is the same place at which the angel offered up the prayers of the saints. It is from the horns of this altar, signifying that it is in answer to the prayers, that the command to loose the angels in the river Euphrates goes forth. This surely shows that the fulfilment primarily in view is future. The horsemen from the Euphrates represent, according to the historical view, the countless hordes of Turks who overran and eventually destroyed the eastern Roman Empire. But

without disputing that the prophecy thus received a partial fulfilment, how could this be an answer to the prayers of saints, as shown by the voice coming from the golden altar? No saint could ever have desired such a scourge; nor, indeed, could the prayers of saints during the present dispensation ever have taken such a form. But when Christ is judging the earth, and the saints cry to God to avenge them of their adversaries, such a scourge may most consistently be let loose in answer to their requests.

The Euphrates was the boundary of Roman rule, which seems to indicate that while the first woe falls upon the unbelieving Israelites, this second woe falls on the revived Roman Empire. In accordance with this view we shall presently see that it is the head of this empire who inflicts the severest persecutions on the saints, so that it is on him and his people that the judgments might be expected chiefly to fall. The destroying host is one prepared beforehand, but restrained until this period. "And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared [not "for *an* hour," but] for *the* hour, and day, and month, and year, for to slay the third part of men." (v. 15.) Here again we find "the third part," confirming the inference that this blow is directed against the resuscitated Roman Empire. Ingenious calculations have been made on the theory that in prophecy each day stands for a year, to show the length of time which this woe lasted, and to harmonize it with recorded historical events. But "the hour, and day, and month, and year," do not signify the duration of the woe, but the time of its commencement. The outbreak of this woe had been determined even to the very hour when it was to begin.

"And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power [or rather, "the power of the horses"] is in their mouth, and in their tails for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt." (vv. 16-19.) The judgment comes with the swiftness of the horse, and has the destructive power of the lion. The countless throng of agents – two hundred million – shows its resistless force, and the complete flooding of the district under visitation. Fire and brimstone, the extreme form of judgment, the symbols of eternal



punishment, and smoke, with its darkening power, are the instruments of destruction. But besides this, a direct Satanic agency is typified in the tails formed like serpents, having poisonous heads with which "they do hurt." There is not only moral death, but physical. Vast destruction of life, besides Satanic poison infused into souls, marks this woe, the details of which will be understood by the wise when it happens, but can only be generally gathered now.

Terrible as this woe is, it produces no repentance. "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." (vv. 20, 21.) We know not what form idolatry will take in the last day, though this book afterwards gives us some hint. But here and in other places we learn the humbling truth that the direction towards which "the progress of the age" is ultimately drifting is the institution of idolatry, in some shape or other, among the civilized nations of the earth. Doubtless it will take some specious and intellectual form, appealing to the natural religious feelings, as in its earlier manifestations it always does, but by God it is simply classed with other heathen abominations. Idolatry and moral corruption are the two great sins denounced by the old prophets, the sins which brought ruin on God's ancient people. History repeats itself; for with all his discoveries and inventions man's moral nature remains everywhere the same. And here in the closing days of the Gentile monarchy the same two sins, idolatry and moral corruption, again draw down the judgment of God.

How solemn a picture of the extent to which man's heart may become hardened against God, that even this dreadful visitation produces no salutary effect. Given up to "strong delusion that they should believe a lie," those who once despised God in His grace will at length despise Him in His government; and each successive stroke of His judgment will only render them more callous and defiant, until at last, like Pharaoh, they walk blindfold into the very flood which is to swallow them up. Such is man. How marvellous the grace that could stoop to the fallen state of creatures so degraded and undone, and purchase them for glory at so inestimable a price! "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

APPENDIX TO THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

(Rev. 10: 1 to 11: 14.)

There is what has been called a parenthesis or interval between the sixth and seventh trumpets as there was between the sixth and seventh seals. But there is this difference: the sixth seal had been opened, and its full effect experienced, before the events mentioned in the interval are detailed; whereas the second woe, which the sixth trumpet inaugurates, does not end until the events of the interval have been fully described. This shows that while the events of the earlier interval are preparatory to the judgment under the seventh seal, the events of the later interval are supplementary to the judgments under the sixth trumpet. This we shall see to be important, as throwing light on the part of the earth, and also on the period of time, in which this woe falls.

The interval deals with two subjects; first, the proclamation of the mighty angel, declaring that the "mystery of God" is shortly about to be finished; and second, the condition of that part of the earth on which God's thoughts are centred, just before the event foretold by the angel takes place.

I. The proclamation of the mighty angel. (Rev. 10): "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." (Rev. 10: 1-4.) That Christ is elsewhere described under the figure of an angel we have already seen. He is called "the angel of the covenant," and it is in this title that He comes for the deliverance of Israel, with whom His covenant is established. Now this, as we shall see, is just the time at which we are arriving, and nothing therefore is more appropriate than that Christ should appear in His angel character. The description of the "mighty angel" confirms this. He is clothed with a cloud, Jehovah's dwelling-place in judgment; as it is written, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." (Ps. 97: 2.) It was from "the cloud," or as Peter calls it, "the excellent glory," that God testified His pleasure in Jesus on "the holy mount" and it is "in a cloud with power and great glory" that the Son of man will come for

the deliverance of His chosen people. The angel also has a rainbow upon or over his head. This is the token of God's everlasting covenant with the earth, and was before seen encircling His throne. The face "as it were the sun," and the "feet as pillars of fire," also closely resemble the figures applied to Christ in the first chapter.

There can be little doubt, then, that the angel here seen is Christ Himself. He has "in His hand a little book," not sealed, like the former, but open. A sealed book is a book whose contents are not yet revealed; an open book is a book whose contents are revealed, if not understood. The sealed book must be opened; the open book must be eaten and digested; for though revealed by God, it needs to be learnt by man. We have already beheld the opening of the sealed book, and shall presently behold the eating of the open book. The first book was sealed because it was new; for though shadows of the coming sorrow appear in the prophets and in our Lord's own words, the orderly marshalling of the judgments under the seals and trumpets was an entirely fresh revelation. This other book, however, would appear to be the open book of prophecy, which the writer of the Revelation was now to ponder and understand.

Now the book of prophecy declares that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein." It also declares that God's Anointed shall have "the nations for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession." In accordance with these and countless similar prophecies, the Angel, who is Jehovah's Anointed, sets "His right foot upon the sea, and His left foot on the earth," thus taking possession of the whole world, the land and the sea, the people under settled government, and those still in a rude, disorganized condition. But His first work when He receives "the nations for His inheritance" will be judgment: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The first sound therefore when taking the dominion is "the king's wrath" which Solomon describes "as the roaring of a lion." (Prov. 19: 12.) Such is the terrible voice that He utters, and the roll of the seven thunders, whose solemn import still remains shrouded from our ken, betokens the going forth of His indignation.

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things that are

therein, that there should be time no longer [or "no longer delay"] but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets." (vv. 5-7.) The meaning of this is clear, and the details are instructive as showing the way in which this book reverts to Old Testament thoughts. Throughout the whole of these trumpet judgments Christ is not seen as the Lamb that was slain, but either as "the Angel of the covenant" or as the Anointed of God. He takes the earth, not in virtue of His work on the cross, which is not named, but as the One whom God, in His sovereign rights as Creator and "possessor of heaven and earth," has resolved to set over the works of his hands. In the fifth chapter, where God appeared as Judge, Christ was seen as the Lamb slain. In the fourth chapter, where God appeared as Creator, the Lamb was not seen. So here, where God is spoken of as the eternal, the One "that liveth for ever and ever," the One "who created heaven, earth, and sea, Christ is again beheld, not in his human character, but as the "mighty angel" declaring God's purposes. These purposes are, that there should "no longer delay," but that "the mystery of God" should now be brought to a close.

The real force of the words "when he shall begin to sound," is "when he shall sound, as he is about to do." This, with the expression, "there shall be no longer delay," fixes the time. It is just before the seventh trumpet, when "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." (Rev. 11: 15.) Then "the mystery of God" will be finished.

The mystery often means the Church, but this is not its meaning here. The whole of the present epoch is a mystery; that is, a secret purpose which God had not previously revealed. "The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" were no mysteries; for it was of these that the prophets had spoken. But though there were passages showing that a longer or shorter time would intervene between these poles of prophecy, yet the purposes of God concerning this period were not revealed, and both its moral features and its duration were therefore a mystery. The mystery, then, which was now to be finished, is that gap, unfilled by former prophecies, which begins with Christ's rejection, and ends with His glorious return to reign over the earth. This is the mystery which the angel swears shall now be brought to a close. We are thus clearly brought to the very verge of the millennial reign of Christ, and whatever events in the historical view may be foreshadowed by this prophecy, its main reference is manifestly to the future.

"And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before [or rather, "about"] many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." (vv. 8-11.) here, as with Ezekiel, the roll when eaten "was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." (Ezek. 3: 3.) But however sweet to the mouth, where the contents are, as with the prophet, "lamentations, and mourning, and woe," the inward digestion must be exceedingly bitter. So it was to John. The open book was a book of judgments, judgments, indeed, already foretold, but not yet comprehended in all their bitter import. Now John learns God's full purposes of judgment towards the world, and sweet as was the sense of this privilege to the taste, the knowledge proved, as it must ever do, bitter to the inward parts.

Such is the double action of God's word in judgment. Looking at God and His glory, the Psalmist says, "The judgments of Jehovah are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Ps. 19: 9, 10.) But when man is looked to, the effect is sadly otherwise. His guilt and rebellion turn the sweet into bitter, the food into poison, life into death, so that in view of these same judgments the prophet exclaims, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jer. 9: 1.) One sees both effects in their perfection in the blessed Lord Himself. After upbraiding "the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done because they repented not," we read that "in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Luke 10: 21.) Here He is occupied with God's side, and finds His ways sweet as honey. But afterwards He looks forward to God's judgments in the light of man's guilt, and then all the yearning sorrow of His heart breaks forth in tears. "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying. If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace."

(Luke 19: 41, 42.)

The knowledge thus obtained was to be used. Hitherto John's prophecies had been the contents of the sealed book, whose judgments were then first unfolded by Christ. Bunt the contents of the open book he had now eaten were to form at least a part of the prophecies he was yet to deliver. Having received divine intelligence to understand the book of prophecy, he was now to be its exponent, and "must prophesy again concerning many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

II. This brings us to the second topic of the interval following the sixth trumpet, the condition of that part of the earth on which God's thoughts are centred just before the event foretold by the angel takes place. (Rev. 11: 1-14.) One most prominent subject dealt with by the ancient prophets is the conflict to be waged between the Gentile oppressor and Jehovah, who takes the part of his suffering people, executes judgment on their enemies, and sets His Anointed on his throne in Zion. This subject forms a principal feature in the rest of the Revelation, which casts fuller light on the purposes of God announced in the old prophets. It is taken up at once, and the new prophecy opens to our gaze the city and temple of Jerusalem. "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: [and the angel stood], saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." (Rev. 11: 1, 2.)

We learn from other scriptures that before the great tribulation multitudes of Jews will have returned to their land, and that their temple will have been rebuilt. This is while the Gentile rule still lasts, and while the bulk of the Jewish people are yet in unbelief, aiming at national advantages by political means rather than looking for deliverance from God. Such is the state of things here disclosed. The prophet's eye is carried back to a time preceding the great tribulation, and the course of events in connection with the temple and Jerusalem is traced down from that time to the closing moments introduced by the seventh trumpet. The temple is seen, and is called "the temple of God," and the altar, and the inner circle of worshippers are owned. But the mass of worshippers, as typified by "the court without," where the people prayed, are not acknowledged. Here the inner and outer enclosure of the temple are used as symbols of the real worshippers, God's elect people, and the mass of empty unbelieving profession around them. The bulk of the

nation have not yet returned to Jehovah, but are placing dependence on the Gentile power with which they are in alliance. Hence they are still defiled, and their city, though holy according to God's counsels, is yet trodden down for forty and two months.

The reason for this term we shall consider hereafter, but at present we shall follow the course of the vision. "And I will give power [or efficacy] unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God [or rather, "Lord "] of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies and if any man will hurt them, he must this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to wood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will." (vv. 3-6.) These witnesses are "olive trees," having oil, or the anointing of the Holy Ghost. They are also lamps, shedding forth the light of the Spirit amidst the "gross darkness" in which at this time Jew and Gentile are both enveloped. Their number is significant. During the Church period, while the Holy Ghost dwelt on earth, there was full, heavenly witness, seven candlesticks sending out their light. The sevenfold light is now transferred, as it were, to heaven, where the "seven lamps of fire burn before the throne." (Rev. 4: 5.) But God will not be without a testimony on earth, and therefore two witnesses – not two persons – but the smallest number for adequate evidence according to Jewish law, are raised up even in this dark day. The meaning of the symbol is, that God gives a sufficient testimony throughout the whole of this period, "a thousand two hundred and threescore days," or the "forty and two months," during which the holy city is trodden under foot by the Gentiles.

What then is this testimony? The witnesses are "clothed in sack-cloth," a familiar expression of mourning and humiliation before God. Believers in our dispensation are told to "rejoice in the Lord always." Rejoicing suits those who have the knowledge of accomplished redemption; sack-cloth suits those who feel and own their sin, and are crying to God for salvation. The garments of mourning will be as appropriate to the suffering Jewish of the Church remnant as the garments of praise are to the Church. These witnesses stand "before the Lord of the earth." Now, though Christ has already the right to the earth, this is not the title which He takes during the Church dispensation. At present He is not of this world, and His redeemed people are not of this world. But when

the Church is taken to the Father's house, and this heavenly dispensation comes to an end, God will resume His plans of earthly government, of which Christ's lordship is at once the solid foundation and the glorious headstone. The woes recorded in this book are God's judgments preparing the way for this event and the testimony raised up during the period of these woes is God's witness to this event.

Hence the attitude of these witnesses to their opponents is not that of Christians, but that of Elijah, who prayed for drought, and called down fire from heaven, and of Moses, who turned water into blood, and smote the earth with plagues. This is God's way in government, but it is quite foreign to His present long-suffering grace. Here, then, we are breathing the atmosphere so familiar in the Psalms, among a mourning, suffering remnant, holding God's truth under persecution, sustained by his power against their adversaries, and praying, not for the conversion, but for the destruction, of their oppressors. The testimony, therefore, is not that of Christians proclaiming the gospel of God's grace, but of the Jewish remnant proclaiming again the gospel of the kingdom, the glorious and triumphant advent of the Messiah.

Their miraculous powers are given just so long as their testimony lasts. But God's time for intervening on His people's behalf is not yet fully come, and hence, after their witness is ended, they are still subject to the persecution of their adversaries. These are at present headed by one called "the beast," of whom we shall hear much more as we go on with the book. "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our [or rather, "their"] Lord was crucified." (vv. 7, 8) This makes it clear that the scene of their testimony is Jerusalem. Whatever wrong the Lord's name may have suffered at Rome, and however truly Rome may be pointed to in the secondary or subordinate applications, it would surely be doing unpardonable violence to the text to maintain that any other city could be meant than the city where our Lord was actually put to death, that is, the city of Jerusalem. The vision of the altar and the temple in the first verse, the character of the testimony borne by the two witnesses, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, at some of which we shall presently look, are all confirmatory of this view, which, indeed, the language of the text imperatively demands.



Jerusalem is looked at in two very different lights, according to its place in God's counsels and to its actual condition. We have both views in this chapter. In speaking of God's purposes, and the guilt of the Gentiles in treading it down, it is called "the holy city." But here, when looked at in its spiritual state, under the power of "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit," it is spoken of as in the deepest moral blackness, reeking with the filthiness of Sodom, and lying under the judgment of Egypt — the city where man's guilt had culminated in the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord.

Here, then, we get two forces drawn up in array against each other, with Jerusalem as the arena of conflict. God has raised up an adequate testimony, not to His grace, but to His government; while "the beast" tries to crush this testimony and to destroy the witnesses. Though somewhat anticipating, it will be well to enquire what these antagonistic forces are.

And first, let us look at the witnesses. Their testimony is, as we have seen, that of a mourning remnant in Jerusalem. Now when and why do we find a remnant of Jews thus lamenting? It is in connection with the return of the Messiah. God has declared that Jerusalem shall become "a cup of trembling unto all the people round about;" that "all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces;" and that the governors of Judah shall be "like a torch of fire in a sheaf and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left, and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem" But connected with this there is a grievous mourning: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son;" there shall be "a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." (Zech. 12: 2-11.)

Deep mourning, therefore, among the faithful Jews precedes their national deliverance. In Luke, too, we read of the sufferings of the godly portion of the nation just before the glorious advent of the Messiah. "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21: 25-28.) Thus we see that on the eve of Christ's

return in power and glory, the godly remnant of the Jews will be in profound distress and misery, bewailing their guilt in rejecting the Messiah, and plunged into the extremity of suffering by the persecution they endure, and the general convulsions and judgments around.

This is the very state of things so vividly pictured in the judgments that follow the sounding of the trumpets. And besides this general correspondence of character, the time itself exactly coincides. In Luke and Zechariah, the troubles described were those immediately preceding Christ's coming and reign. What, then, have we in the Revelation? We there see the lamp of testimony as to God's government of the nations once more kindled at Jerusalem; we see the strong angel, who represents Christ, taking possession of the whole earth, and swearing that there shall be no longer delay; we see the promise that on the sounding of the last trumpet the mystery of God shall be finished; and we see, looking a little forward, that when the seventh trumpet is blown, "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." These scriptures then, no less than the character of the witnesses themselves, show that the subject of the testimony they are now sending forth is the speedy return of the Messiah to judge His enemies, deliver His people, and establish His throne.

Such is one party to this great controversy. What then is the other, called "the beast"? We learn here that he "ascendeth out of the bottomless pit," puts to death the witnesses, and exercises power in Jerusalem during the twelve hundred and sixty days of their prophecy, or the last forty-two months that the holy city is trodden under foot by the Gentiles. In Rev. 13 he is described as having seven heads and ten horns. One of his heads was "wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the beast" The dragon gives "him his power, and his throne, and great authority," and all "that dwell upon the earth worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life." Power is "given unto him to continue forty and two months," during which time he blasphemes God, and makes war with the saints and overcomes them. Rev. 17 speaks of him as one "that was, and is not, and shall be present;" also as coming "out of the bottomless pit;" and going into perdition, while it explains his seven heads to be "seven mountains." In Rev. 19 he makes war with Christ, and is "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Combining these descriptions, it seems that "the beast" is the head of the Gentile kingdom which rules over Jerusalem just before Christ's glorious advent, and has

its seat in the seven-hilled city, or Rome. Now the Roman empire was the last of those four great monarchies which, according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, were to hold sway during the times of the Gentiles, and to be broken in pieces by Christ's coming, as the stone "cut out without hands," and setting up his own dominion over the earth. This power disappears for a while, as signified in the head wounded to death; it "was and is not." But it "shall be present," for the deadly wound is healed, and in this last time at which we are now looking it reappears with a specially infernal character, typified by its rising up out of the bottomless pit, and becomes Satan's chief tool in persecuting the witnesses who are prophesying of Christ's return and of the coming kingdom. For three and a half years, or forty-two months, the beast makes war with the saints, speaks blasphemies against God, and at length heads the confederacy against the Lord and against His anointed, in which climax of wickedness he meets his fearful doom.

A passage from Daniel further illustrates this. To him was revealed God's governmental ways during the times of the Gentiles, or the period during which Judah is set aside and the sceptre transferred to Gentile hands. Four monarchies successively arise — the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. This last is figured as a "beast dreadful and terrible . . . and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." Then the Ancient of days comes in judgment, and "because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake, I beheld, even till the beast was slain." Afterwards "one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven," to whom is given "an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away." (Dan. 7: 7-14.) From the explanation we learn that "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise." The little horn comes up "after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time," which, as we shall presently see, means three and a half years. Then the judgment sits, the dominion of the little horn is taken away, and the kingdom "given to the people of the saints of the Most High." (vv. 23-27.)

Here the statements are perfectly simple. The fourth beast is the Roman Empire. This great dominion was at

length overrun by the barbarians, thus receiving a deadly wound, from which, humanly speaking, it seems impossible that it should recover. As a united political power it disappeared, being divided into independent kingdoms, which historians have reckoned at ten in number. This is the present state of things. The Roman empire is no longer in existence. It "was, and is not." But the separate kingdoms into which was broken, though often fluctuating in extent and number, yet remain; and out of these kingdoms, in the last days of Gentile supremacy, will arise a king, like the little horn in the vision, who subverts three of the ten independent sovereigns, and revives in some form or other the long vanished unity and power of the old Roman Empire. This king will blaspheme the Most High, and persecute His saints, for a term of three and a half years, until judgment overtakes him, and the Son of man receives the dominion, the kingdom being taken from the Gentiles and "given to the people of the saints of the Most High."

Nothing can be clearer, then, than the identity between this little horn and "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit." Both are heads of the strangely-revived Roman Empire. Both have dominion in Jerusalem, which is yet under Gentile supremacy. Both blaspheme God and persecute the saints. Both exercise their sway during the last three and a half years of Gentile rule. Both are cut off in judgment by the coming of Christ, who restores Israel to her promised place of superiority among the nations, and establishes His own righteous kingdom over the world.

Such, then, are the times described in this chapter of the Revelation: the Jews returned to Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt; a number of true worshippers owned, but the mass of the people yet in unbelief; the city again recognized as holy according to God's purpose, but as to its actual condition defiled, unrepentant, and still under a foreign yoke; true witnesses testifying of the coming Messianic kingdom, but the last head of the Gentile powers yet permitted to persecute them to death.

The Gentiles, and "they that dwell upon the earth," rejoice over the suppression of this testimony, little suspecting that in spite of the death of the witnesses, the prophecy is on the very eve of fulfilment. "And they [or some] 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. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that

dwelt on the earth." (vv. 9, 10.) Here two classes are distinguished, the nations or Gentiles, and the dwellers on the earth. Of the former "some," no doubt a vast majority, rejoice, and in their triumph will not even allow the bodies to be buried. But still louder in their exultation are the other class, "they that dwell upon the earth." This name is, as we have seen, not a local, but a moral description, indicating earthly-minded people. To such persons, loving and living for the world, the prophecy of the witnesses, foretelling a kingdom of righteousness and judgment, is intolerable. Their joy is therefore intense when they hear that the hated witnesses are slain, and the voice of the dreaded testimony silenced.

But their triumph is brief. Only three and a half days have passed by when they are terrified by a miraculous display of God's power, showing His acceptance of the fallen witnesses and His wrath against their exultant destroyers. "And after [the] three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they [or I] heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a [or the] cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." (vv. 11-13.)

"The first resurrection" is for the most part already past. The blessed Lord Himself was "the first fruits of them that slept." "Afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" will be caught up to meet Him in the air. This coming of Christ for His saints is before the period of tribulation which these chapters detail. The Old Testament saints and the Church have their part in this first resurrection, and have been seen in heaven before the judgments we are now considering had commenced. But by a further act of quickening power two other classes have also part in the first resurrection. These are "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and [those] which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image." (Rev. 20: 4.) Thus the first resurrection includes three classes; first, those who are raised before these sorrows begin, and are already seen in heaven under the figure of the four and twenty elders; second, those "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God," whose souls were beheld under the altar on the opening of the fifth seal; and third, those who suffer death for refusing to

worship the beast and his image. To this class the slain witnesses belong.

Their resurrection is striking and public, the very malice of their enemies contributing to enhance its glory; for while the earth is ringing with rejoicings over their downfall, while their unburied corpses are decaying in the streets of the city, they are suddenly filled with fresh life, and caught up to heaven, like Christ Himself, in a cloud, or rather in *the* cloud, the express emblem of the divine presence. "And their enemies beheld them." What a sight! More appalling than the handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar's palace, and pointing to a still more terrible doom. At the same moment an earthquake shakes the city, and seven thousand men are cut off in the midst of their exultations. The survivors, affrighted, render homage to God, glorifying Him as the God of heaven. But there is no repentance; no recognition of His claims to the earth, now about to be asserted; no submission to the truth which the raised witnesses had proclaimed. There is natural terror, and the religious awe which natural terror inspires; but no exercise of conscience, no faith, no bowing to the testimony of God's word. And yet the trumpet announcing its fulfilment is just about to sound: "The second woe is past; behold, the third woe cometh quickly." (v. 14.)

SEVENTH TRUMPET.

(Verses 15-18.)

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ [or "the kingdom of the world" (meaning "the world-kingdom") "of our Lord, and of his Christ, is come"] and He shall reign for ever and ever." (v. 15.) Such is the burden of this last trumpet, ushering in the reign of our Lord and of his Christ, of Jehovah and His anointed — that glorious reign in which "He shall judge the people with righteousness, and the poor with judgment;" in which "the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth;" in which "all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve Him." (Ps. 72.) To this groaning creation it is art hour of unspeakable blessedness, of deliverance "from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (Rom. 8: 21.)

Why, then, is it called a woe? To "the inhabitants of the earth" it is indeed a woe, the greatest of all woes.

However creation may smile, however the tried remnant of God's people may rejoice, however the countless multitude of the believing Gentiles may give thanks, to the earthly-minded, the persecutors of the saints, the rulers and oppressors of the world, it is a time of judgment and unsparing retribution. This causes joy and thanksgiving in heaven, especially among the saints, who now behold for the first time God's rights over the earth fully established, and Christ occupying the place to which He is entitled, both as the Creator of all things, and as the Lamb that was slain: "And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats [or thrones], fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast [and art to come]; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 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." (vv. 16-18.) The details of this last woe are not here recorded, though some of them are given in later chapters. But the grand result is the end of all lawless and godless authority, and the establishment of the world-kingdom of Jehovah and His anointed. The language and the scene both recall the second Psalm. The witnesses had proclaimed the coming kingdom, sending forth the, warning, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." (vv. 10-12.) But instead of heeding the exhortation, "the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their hands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Thus the great powers of the earth are in confederacy to resist Christ's dominion. How vain their efforts! "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." Next comes judgment, such as those preliminary woes at which we have been looking in the Revelation: "Then shall he speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." But all this is only preparatory to His great object: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." The King now speaks, and further announces God's purpose: "I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." But these are now in the hands of

kings who have been taking counsel against him. The nations are angry, and wicked men are destroying the earth. The first work therefore must be judgment; and so the decree goes on, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Who can fail to see the analogy between the Psalm and the Revelation, or to discern that they are both speaking of the same thing, the establishment of Christ's world-kingdom in Zion, "the city of our God?" This kingdom is everywhere spoken of as inaugurated by solemn judgments. To follow the figure of a well-known parable, the rejected nobleman has "returned, having received the kingdom," and His solemn sentence is, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." (Luke 19: 11-27.) Such is the issue of the seventh trumpet, over which the elders in heaven, representing the glorified saints, now utter their rejoicings. They give thanks to God under His Old Testament name, a name associated with His covenants as to the earth, "the Lord God Almighty." They speak of the world-kingdom as His; for the kingdom of Christ is also the kingdom of God. When Christ reigns as man He is just as much the obedient servant, not doing His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him, as He was in the days of His suffering and humiliation. The perfection of His rule is that instead of exercising it in independence and self-will, as both Jew and Gentile had done, He exercises it in perfect subjection to the will of God. It is therefore Jehovah's kingdom, and in the prophets and Psalms is indifferently spoken of as Jehovah's and Christ's. Sometimes it is said, "Jehovah reigneth," and sometimes "the King," as distinguished from Jehovah, is described as reigning. Both are true; for on the throne, as in His humiliation, His word holds good, "I and my Father are one." This unity is beautifully shown in "the voices in heaven;" for after declaring that "the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come," they go on to say, not "and *they* shall reign," but "*He* shall reign for ever and ever."

The effects of the reign here briefly summarized are named in the order of importance, not of time. Thus the judging of the dead, the most solemn and momentous act of the reign, is mentioned first, though in reality it does not take place until the close. But Christ "shall judge the quick and the dead;" and though the judgment of the dead is not till the end, the judgment of the quick is at the beginning. It comprehends the distribution of reward to "the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name," and the destroying of "them which destroy the



earth."

The prophets and saints here spoken of are not those already in heaven; for the whole theme here is connected with the world-kingdom which Jehovah and His Christ are now taking, and the reward or judgment of those who are still on the earth. Of the prophets who witnessed of His kingdom some, in spite of persecution, have probably escaped. These, then, are the prophets rewarded. Besides these, however, God has also His "saints;" that is, a people sanctified and set apart for Himself, "the saints of the Most High," against whom the ruling earthly power has directed his cruel hostility. But Christ now comes to "judge the poor of the people," to "save the children of the needy," and to "break in pieces the oppressor." Those Israelitish saints, snatched by His coming from the hand of their deadly foe, now receive their reward. They are placed in the position of pre-eminence lately occupied by their oppressors, and associated with Christ in the execution of judgment, with "a two edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the Gentiles, and punishments upon the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written this honour have all His saints." (Ps. 142: 6-9.) Besides the prophets and saints, there are numbers of Gentiles scattered over the earth that fear God's name. In the judgment of the nations Christ owns them as the blessed of His Father, and bids them "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Such is the reward of the believing Gentiles, of "them that fear thy name."

The other side of the picture is the destruction of "them which destroy the earth." This is a mighty and dreadful work. The Lord Jesus is "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1: 7, 8.) The prophets of the Old Testament relate the destruction of the Assyrian, of Gog, and of other smaller foes. In Matthew we see the solemn judgment of the living nations before the tribunal of Christ; but in the Revelation the special judgments recorded are those of the beast and his confederates. He is the great power then destroying the earth and persecuting "the saints of the Most High." It is on him therefore that the stone falls with the most crushing force, grinding him to powder beneath its overwhelming weight. And it is specially over his destruction that the elders in heaven now rejoice.

Having now reached the close of that consecutive series of judgments which precedes the establishment of Christ's

world-kingdom, it may be well to glance back and briefly retrace the path which we have thus trodden.

The second and third chapters reveal Christ's judgment of the Church as a professing system, giving in the picture of the seven churches in Asia an outline chart of the history of Christendom from the first departure to the last phase of its existence on earth. Beginning with waning affection for Christ, it gradually becomes careless about evil, and at length stands forth either in the gross corruption of Thyatira, the hopeless deadness of Sardis, or the nauseous lukewarmness of Laodicea, a barren wilderness relieved only by the bright oasis which refreshes the eye in the weak but faithful Philadelphia.

With the end of the third chapter the Church on earth disappears. "The things which are" fade from our sight, and "the things which shall be after them" rise into view. Henceforth God is seen, not in the character He bears towards the Church, but in the character in which He reveals Himself in the Old Testament scriptures. A company appears in heaven which certainly is not angelic, and bears all the marks of representing the saints, risen and glorified, in the presence of God. The work of judgment is about to begin, and the "lightnings and thunderings and voices" issuing from the throne proclaim that it is a throne of righteousness, and not of grace, on which God is now seated. A sealed book full of judgment is in His hand, and no man is found worthy to open it until Christ, the Man of God's counsels, appears, the One to whom, as "Son of man," all judgment is committed. As "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," He will execute God's judgments, and carry out His government on the earth. This He does by a double title, as the slain Lamb, and as the Man of God's choice. He first appears as the slain Lamb, and as such He opens the seals of the book which He has received from God.

The first four seals usher in judgments, which, however severe, are not out of the ordinary course of human events — conquest, bloody wars, famine, and widespread devastation and disease. The fifth shows persecution to be raging, and a prayer for judgment rises up from the souls of the martyred saints, which clearly indicates that the day of grace is over and the day of retribution begun. On the opening of the sixth seal there is, as if in answer to this prayer, a general shaking of the powers of the earth, and universal consternation at the prospect of the wrath which is thought to be immediately impending. All this corresponds with the famines and wars, persecutions and pestilences, foretold in our Lord's discourse as "the beginning of sorrows.

Then comes a significant pause. The judgments that follow are of a more terrible character, and a special election of God is signified, marking those who shall pass through them without suffering death. From each of twelve tribes of Israel twelve thousand are sealed in the forehead; and a countless multitude of Gentiles, though not thus sealed, are shown as passing through "the great tribulation," and obtaining the victory, having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Thus the line between Israel and the Gentiles, obliterated during the Church period, again appears. We find ourselves also on the confines of that "great tribulation" which, though having its centre among the Jews, expands in ever-widening circles till its waves reach the furthest limits of the habitable earth.

After this brief respite the seventh seal is opened, and another series of judgments, more dreadful and more distinctly from God's hand, falls upon the world. These are introduced by seven trumpets sounded by seven angels, and during the course of these judgments Christ is no longer seen as the Lamb slain, but as "the Messenger of the covenant," and always in angelic character. As such He offers up the prayers of the saints, and the answer is the fire of God's consuming judgment cast on to the earth, thus again showing that the day of Christ's patience is over, and a totally different dispensation begun. The trumpets follow each other in rapid and dreadful succession. The first four announce wars, tumults, delusions, and anarchy spread over a third part of the world, a phrase probably signifying the Roman Empire. But the worst is still to follow, in the three last trumpets which bring "woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth."

The first of these woes is obviously infernal in character, spiritual darkness, accompanied with torment of conscience worse than death, judicially let loose for the judgment of those Israelites who have not the seal of God in their forehead.

The second woe falls apparently on the Roman Empire, and is called for by a voice from the altar of intercession. It is a fearful scourge, having a Satanic character, and inflicting horrible slaughter and misery on the region it visits. But other purposes of God manifest themselves during the course of this woe. A strong angel, whom we recognize as Christ himself, descends from heaven and takes possession of sea and land, swearing by God, as Creator of heaven and earth, that there shall be no longer delay, but that, when the next angel sounds, the mystery of God shall be finished. The book of prophecy is

given into John's hand, who is enabled to understand its bitter contents, and thus to prophesy again concerning nations and kings. Immediately on this we behold Jerusalem once more inhabited by Jews, with the temple rebuilt and the temple worship re-established. Among the worshippers God has His own saints, but the great body of the people are as yet defiled, and Jerusalem is still to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles forty and two months. During this time God raises up witnesses to his present work, and for twelve hundred and sixty days, that is, driving the last period of Gentile domination, their testimony continues. At the close of this time, however, the head of the revived Roman Empire, which is then trampling down Jerusalem, succeeds, to the great joy of the dwellers on the earth, in putting the witnesses to death. This is scarcely done when their bodies are visibly quickened, and they are caught up to heaven in the sight of their late exulting, but now terrified, adversaries, seven thousand of whom are at the same moment overwhelmed by a violent earthquake that shatters the city.

But the term of man's guilt is now reached, and at the peal of the last trumpet great voices in heaven proclaim that the world kingdom of Jehovah and His Christ is come. Thus "the mystery of God" is finished, and the reign of righteousness on the earth brought in. The dead are to be judged, though this is the last act. The prophets, the saints, and those that fear God's name, are to receive their reward; and the wicked destroyers of the earth are themselves given over to destruction.

#### GOD'S PEOPLE AND THEIR OPPRESSORS.

Revelation 11: 19 to 13: 18.

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament [or covenant]: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." (Rev. 11: 19.) Such is the vision introducing the new scenes which are now to pass before us. These are not a continuation of the judgments already depicted. They are another set of events, contemporaneous and connected with the former, but here expanded in much fuller detail.

The verse just quoted shows God's present thoughts. From the Babylonish captivity the ark of the covenant was lost, and never afterwards heard of. While it was in the tabernacle or temple, it was the central object, the sign of Jehovah's presence, the pledge of Jehovah's care. But

the earthly things were only copies of the heavenly. The appearance of the ark in the heavenly temple is therefore a great event. Hitherto unseen, it now comes into view, a figure showing that the covenant with Israel, though long hidden from sight, is now again taking its former place in the thoughts and ways of God. The ark is the sign of security to his own people, but also of judgment to His enemies, as when the walls of Jericho fell flat, and the victorious Philistines were put to shame, in its presence. So here, the lightnings and voices speak of coming wrath on the Gentile oppressor.

We have already seen that numbers of Jews are, for at least three and a half years before Christ's coming, resident in Jerusalem, where, though for the most part still in unbelief, they have rebuilt the temple, and reinstated the old worship. Taking Jerusalem, then, as the focus towards which everything now converges, we discern there three distinct parties; first, a faithful remnant, among whom are the witnesses proclaiming the coming of the Messianic kingdom; second, the rest of the nation, who still remain in obstinate unbelief; and third, the Gentile oppressor, who treads Jerusalem under foot, and eventually puts the witnesses to death. God's care of His own people, and His judgment of the Gentile oppressor and the head of the unbelieving Jews, are the principal subjects of this part of the book.

But there is another actor in this drama not yet brought on to the stage. Satan is no idle spectator of these scenes. Whatever is dear to God is hateful to him. When God is occupied with the Church, the Church is the object of his hostility. When God returns to Israel, Israel becomes the object of his hostility. Hence we see him here persecuting the remnant with all his fury and malignity. In the two following chapters therefore we have unfolded, first, Satan's rage against the believing Jewish remnant; next, the character and objects of the beast, the great Gentile ruler now oppressing Jerusalem and lastly, the craft and cruelty of the impostor who acts in concert with the beast at the head of the unbelieving Jews.

#### THE WOMAN AND THE SERPENT.

(Revelation 12)

"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; and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be

delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 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." (vv. 1-5.)

Now who is this woman? She is clothed with the sun, or supreme authority, and has the moon, the symbol of derived authority, under her feet, while she is crowned with full administrative power, indicated by the perfect number of subordinate authorities, the twelve stars, upon her head. This is just the place which promise and prophecy assign to Israel. She also brings forth the "man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." This is obviously Christ. The woman, then, is Israel, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9: 5.) It is Israel, not, of course, in her sin and shame, the byword and reproach of the Gentiles, but Israel clothed with the glory which belongs to her in the purposes of God, "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." (Rom. 9: 4).

Opposed to Israel is a dragon or serpent, a creature full of subtlety, a liar and deceiver from the beginning, and, above all, the sworn foe of the woman's seed. From the fall God had told him that the woman's seed "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." (Gen. 3: 15.) The dragon is red, the imperial colour, and has seven heads, each with a crown, showing that in the exercise of his imperial power he is guided by full deliberative wisdom; not divine wisdom indeed, and a wisdom which in the end proves fatal folly, but such wisdom as the creature is capable of without God. He has ten horns, or instruments of power, under his control. "His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the ground," which signifies that he drags in his fatal toils a third part of the subordinate powers of the world, that part, as we shall presently see, included in the revived Roman Empire.

For though Satan is "the prince of this world," he is here seen only in connection with that portion of it which is then oppressing God's chosen people. He is the prince of the Roman Empire who moulds this state to his own image, and invests its monarch with his own

authority. Hence, when the Roman Empire afterwards appears, it also has seven heads and ten horns, the ten horns being crowned, and signifying ten kings, answering to the ten horns or instruments of power which Satan wields.

Satan's great object of enmity is Christ; for the "liar from the beginning" must hate "the truth;" "the ruler of the darkness of this world" must hate "the light;" the false usurper of dominion must hate the true Anointed of God. From Christ's birth, therefore, Satan sought to destroy Him. At Bethlehem he seemed almost to have gained his end, but God's protecting shield was spread over the child. At the cross he did appear to be victorious; for there he wounded the heel of the woman's seed. But here again God intervened, and the dependent, perfect Man, who had voluntarily yielded to the power of death to accomplish the glory of God, was raised again, triumphant over every foe, and "caught up unto God, and to His throne."

A great chasm now opens in the prophecy. The Church period is sunk, its having nothing to do with the conflict between Satan and Israel. During the whole of this interval God declares Israel to be "Lo-ammi [not my people]; for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God." But now Israel's restoration is at hand; the ark of the covenant is again seen in heaven, and God sends His message, "Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi [my people]; and to your sisters, Ruhamah [having obtained mercy]." (Hosea 1: 9, 2: 1.) All that intervenes is buried in silence. The Church, the body of Christ, is not seen, except as it is seen in Christ Himself; its rapture is not named, except as it is included in His own.

The vision leaps at once to the closing days of Israel's rejection. "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 threescore days." (v. 6.) This, though clothed in figurative language, is quite clear. Satan, balked in his efforts to destroy Christ, now directs his malice against His people. All his wiles and power are summoned for their destruction, and they are actually driven to flight. But God still watches over them; and in the wilderness He cares for them, supplies their wants, and shields them from their enemy. The period during which they are thus hidden is twelve hundred and sixty days, the same time that the witnesses testify in Jerusalem, that Daniel's little horn is suffered to continue, and that the holy city is trodden under foot of the Gentiles before its final deliverance. This shows that the time here named is that

brief period, three and a half years, preceding the overthrow of the Gentile power, the restoration of Israel, and the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom.

This will be confirmed by other prophecies, but the vision now changes to show us quite a different scene. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (vv. 7-9.) No careful reader of Scripture will wonder at finding Satan in heaven. Limited as our knowledge on the subject is, we read of "spiritual wickedness," or spiritual powers of wickedness, "in heavenly places," and we see him as the devil, or asperser, accusing the brethren, and as Satan, the adversary, opposing Joshua, the high priest, and Michael, the archangel. Probably he cannot enter "the third heaven" where God dwells, but he clearly has some place in the heavens out of which he is driven by this war.

The dragon is at this time the great enemy and persecutor of God's people. Now Michael, his opponent, is "the great prince which standeth for the children of God's people." He is the only "archangel" named, and is always mentioned in connection with Israel. It is he that aids the angel sent to Daniel when withstood by "the prince of the kingdom of Persia." (Dan. 10: 13.) The same angel, going to contend with the princes of Persia and Greece, says, "There is none that holdeth with me in these things but Michael, your prince." (vv. 20, 21.) And on the eve of Jewish deliverance Michael shall "stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan. 12: 1.) So in Jude he disputes with Satan "about the body of' Moses." It would seem therefore that there are evil principalities and powers directing the nations antagonistic to Israel, and that Israel itself is under the special guardianship of Michael, the chief of those blessed angels who are the ministers of God, doing his pleasure. It is significant therefore of God's revived purposes towards Israel that Michael, "the great prince which standeth for" the people, is the angel who here wages war against the dragon, their relentless persecutor and traducer.

There is joy in heaven over this victory. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come. salvation, and strength" [or "the salvation and the strength"] "and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the



accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." (vv. 10, 11.) It is not said from whom this song comes, but only saints in heaven could speak of the suffering remnant on earth as "our brethren." It is not, therefore, the song of angels, but of glorified saints represented by the elders. The expulsion of Satan from heaven was a necessary preliminary to "the salvation, and the strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ;" indeed, so necessary, that on its accomplishment these are already said to have come. All the hindrances in heaven are removed, though, as we shall see, there are yet enemies to be overcome on earth. But Satan's power as accuser of the brethren, by which he was able to harass and distress them, is broken for ever. These saints, though thus harassed and distressed, had "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb," and had thus held their testimony against all his power, and remained steadfast even unto death.

But though Satan's expulsion causes joy in heaven, the immediate effect is disastrous to the earth. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to [the inhabitants of] the earth and 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.) Shorn of his power to accuse the saints in heaven, he pursues them with all his rancour on the earth. Moreover, he knows that his time is brief, for the kingdom of Christ is near, and his baleful dominion is therefore drawing to a close.

Hence his whole strength is concentrated against God's people, represented by the woman. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." (v. 13.) This is not a different persecution from that previously named. The narrative was interrupted to relate the war in heaven, and explain the intensity of the dragon's present rage. Having shown this, it resumes the story of his persecution, and of the woman's flight and sojourn in the wilderness. "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that he might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. [This is the same expression translated in Daniel, "a time, and times, and the dividing of time."] And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her

mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus [Christ]." (vv. 14-17.) Thus the dragon's persecution drives the woman, the godly remnant of Israel, into the wilderness. Her flight is swift, God giving special providential aid, as signified by the "two wings of a great eagle."

It is to this time, shortly preceding the coming of the Son of man from heaven, that our Lord refers in his prophetic warning: "Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. 24: 16-21.) This is often referred to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, and somewhat similar, though far from identical, language is applied to that event in Luke. But the prophecy in Luke contains no such urgent appeals for haste; and, in fact, the advance of the Roman army left ample leisure to the Christians to quit the city, and take their goods with them. But besides this, the quotation from Daniel fixes the time. There can only be one tribulation exceeding all that have been before, and all that will come after. Now this is named in Daniel, whose words are quoted by our Lord. But as our Lord adds, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened . . . and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven" (vv. 29, 30); so Daniel adds, "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Dan. 12: 1.)

The great tribulations spoken of by our Lord and by Daniel are therefore identical, being the brief period of sorrow immediately preceding the deliverance of Israel, and the reign of the Messiah. At that time our Lord forewarns the faithful to flee with all speed from the city. We have the same period before us in the passage we are now looking at from the Revelation, and we see that the flight actually takes place, and that the believing remnant escape into the wilderness, into a hiding-place prepared by God, special aid being given them, as signified in the "eagle's wings," to hasten their speed.

Satan's rage is not appeased by their exile from

Jerusalem. He still pursues them with his hatred, pouring out a flood to devour them. This probably means another persecution, as David says, "The floods of ungodly men made me afraid." (Ps. 18: 4.) But whatever form his malice takes, God cares for His people, and a providential door of escape is opened – the earth swallows up the flood. Thus baffled, Satan turns from the fugitive remnant, who are safe in the shelter of God's providing, and expends his rage on any who may yet have been unable to take to flight, or the witnesses who may have remained behind to continue their prophecy, all, indeed, who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus."

In his persecution of the woman, as in all his other ways, Satan's malice only subserves the purposes of God. He uses this persecution of the faithful to "try them as gold is tried," carrying them into the very place where He can meet them. Outwardly it is Satan's rage that drives them into the wilderness, but to the eye which sees God's ways, it is He that has drawn them there. He has now visited on His beloved, but unfaithful, earthly bride, "the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, . . . and forgat me, saith the Lord." The time is come of which it is written, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor (trouble) for a door of hope." (Hosea 2: 13-15.) It is here, in the wilderness, whither He has allured her, in this deep valley of tribulation, that He unfolds to them the greatness of their sin, shows them the riches of His own mercy, and leads them to true repentance and faith in Him. Hence it is that they emerge purified, and fitted for Jehovah's blessing.

#### THE GENTILE OPPRESSOR.

(Revelation 13: 1-10.)

We now see the dragon in direct antagonism with the woman. But he works behind the scenes, through his agents, for Satan always seeks to work by craft, and himself to remain unobserved. Though at this time nearing the end of his deadly sway, he is still "the god of this world," and he uses his few remaining moments with fearful energy to finish his masterpiece of deception and wickedness. God has a people whom He purposes to set above all the nations of the world. Satan will have such a people too. God has an anointed Ruler of the world, whom He will invest with His own authority. Satan will

have such a ruler too. God has his Christ, the Lamb, whom He will bring forth as the deliverer of Israel. Satan will have his Antichrist, his false Lamb, who pretends to be the deliverer of Israel too. The workings of Satan are a hideous parody, so to speak, of the ways of God. This is what now comes before us.

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat [or throne], and great authority. 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." (Rev. 13: 1-3.)

Every one must be struck with the resemblance between this vision and that of Daniel, who saw "the four winds of the heaven strive upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a *lion*; . . . a second, like to a *bear*; another like a *leopard*. . . . After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; . . . and it had *ten horns*." (Dan. 7: 2-7.) In both cases the beasts came up out of the sea, the struggling, unformed mass of nations, not yet moulded into coherent political societies, out of which both the Roman and the other Gentile monarchies originally arose. The beast in the Revelation combines in himself the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the last beast of Daniel's vision, while resembling the dragon in his seven heads and ten horns. It has the swiftness of the Macedonian, the voracity of the Persian, the ferocity of the Babylonian, and the mighty strength of the Roman Empire, all inspired by Satanic principles and energy.

But though heir to the whole Gentile succession, and having certain moral affinities with each of the four monarchies, it is the immediate lineal descendant of the last. We have already seen that this beast is, like the little horn of Daniel, that revived form of the Roman Empire which surprises the world shortly before Christ comes to establish His kingdom. We read that "there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." (Rev. 17: 10, 11.) The kings in this passage mean heads or forms of government. Of these the Roman government had passed through several, here reckoned as

five. The sixth or imperial form then existed, and a seventh was to arise and continue for a short space. The final form of the empire will be that embodied in the beast, who "is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."

The head "wounded to death," then, would seem to be the seventh, that is the last form which the empire took before its overthrow. From that time till now it disappears from view. But the wound is healed, and all the world wonders. The long-vanished empire revives, the lineal heir of the varied forms of Roman dominion, and becomes the theme of universal amazement, its head being endowed by Satan with all the power and dignity and authority which as god of this world he is able to bestow. Thus we learn the deeply solemn fact that the last form of Gentile dominion will rise from the bottomless pit, will bear the dragon's form, and will sit upon the dragon's throne. It will have a Satanic origin, possess a Satanic character, and exercise Satanic power.

But the terrific energy of evil during these last days of "woe to the earth" is shown also in another form. Satan and his human tool become the objects of religious worship. "And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" (v. 4.) What a ghastly commentary on this age of progress and cultivation to read the words of the living God telling us where it is all to end. Man's energy and self-will only make him Satan's tool. He fancies himself free, and, in throwing off God's yoke, dreams that he has escaped from bondage, whereas he has only rendered himself the slave of sin. Christ came to deliver from the power of darkness; but if men love darkness rather than light, they still remain under the dreadful yoke. The result is that God gives them up, and Satan becomes their absolute lord. "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools," and the terrible end, as here shown, is nothing less than putting Satan in God's place, prostrating themselves before the deceiver and destroyer of souls, and "worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

As long as the Holy Ghost is in the world, there is a restraint laid upon the power of evil, so that, though the mystery of iniquity already works, it cannot break through the barriers with which God has hedged it round. But when the Church is caught up to be with Christ, the Holy Ghost no longer makes His abode on earth, and then the "letting," or hindering, power is "taken out of the way." (2 Thess. 2: 7.) Thus man's self-will is no longer

restrained by the Holy Ghost, while Satan's malice is aroused to twofold energy by the knowledge "that he hath but a short time." No wonder then that human presumption and rebellion against God become a resistless torrent, sweeping away all obstacles in its headlong course.

How long God's grace has pleaded with man! How earnest the invitations, how solemn the warnings, how tender the appeals, which have come as it were from the heart of God to a perishing world! But all has been in vain. And "he, that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." God gives man over at last to taste the bitter fruits of his own wickedness and folly. Iniquity is allowed for a time to have its own disastrous way. "And there was given unto him [that is, the beast] a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue [or work] forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (vv. 5-8.)

At present we often see God practically ignored, the fool pursuing his career of sin and folly, saying "in his heart, There is no God." But in this passage there is an advance in wickedness. The time is coming, and we know not how soon it may be here, when the only god acknowledged by the great ruler of the world will be the dragon, and when God, the Creator of heaven and earth, will be derided and blasphemed. Heaven, and all in it, will be the object of scorn and hatred to "the man of the earth" (Ps. 10: 18), whose heart has become the willing echo of all Satan's delusions and lies. Exaltation of self, blasphemy of God, such is the miserable folly of this vain instrument of Satan, little dreaming, in his fancied security and power, of the awful doom that speedily awaits him. During a brief period of "forty and two months" his rule will be allowed to continue, for so long is Israel to be tested, so long is Satan to have his own way, so long is man to show what he is when left to the workings of his own heart. During this time God is choosing His own people "in the furnace of affliction." (Isa. 48: 10.) He lets the scorching rays of the beast's fury fall upon them that He may purge away all their dross. Hence the war against them is successful, and the beast's triumph seemingly complete. All worship him save God's elect — those whose names have, from the foundation

of the world, been written in the book of life of the slain Lamb.

Here again we observe the resemblance between this beast and the little horn of Daniel. The little horn "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." (Dan. 7: 21.) The beast has "given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." (Rev. 13: 7.) The little horn "speaks great words against the Most High." (Dan. 7: 25.) The beast "opens his mouth in blasphemy against God." (Rev. 13: 6.) The little horn's power lasts "a time, and times, and the dividing of time." (Dan. 7: 25.) The beast's power continues "forty and two months" (Rev. 13: 5), which is only another way of expressing the same period.

Meanwhile the prayers of the persecuted saints are rising: "O God, the Gentiles are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? Pour out thy wrath upon the Gentiles that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. . . . Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die; and render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations." (Ps. 79.)

Such, as we learn from the Psalms, is the language of God's saints in this terrible crisis, when the wicked man is puffing at his enemies, and saying "in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. . . . God hath forgotten: He hideth his face; He will never see it." (Ps. 10: 6-11.) But a word of comfort for the groaning saints is dropped in the midst of this dreadful scene: "If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (vv. 9, 10) To anybody who can distinguish between God's ways in government and God's ways in grace, it will be obvious how such words agree with the former, and differ from the

latter. Stephen had to do with God's ways in grace. What comfort would it have been to him, when praying for his persecutors, to tell him that they would be stoned? In this passage, however, we are in another dispensation, connected with God's ways in government; and then the promise given to His saints is, that their persecutor shall soon be destroyed; that the one who is leading them into captivity shall himself be taken captive; that the one who is killing them with the sword shall himself perish by the sword. This it was that during the short intervening time of sorrow and persecution was to uphold "the patience and the faith of the saints."

#### THE ANTICHRIST

(Revelation 13: 11-18.)

We have now seen the first half of Satan's terrible work. Civil government is received directly from the dragon, and allegiance and worship rendered to him and his instrument. But there is another part of the work of delusion and blasphemy yet to be accomplished, and at this we must now look. "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.) This beast does not, like the first, "rise up out of the sea," the troubled, agitated condition of society, but "out of the earth," a state of ordered and settled government. When we look at his character and pretensions we find that, bad as the other beast was, there is here something yet more dreadful. Looking like a lamb, he bears the external appearance of the Messiah, but to those who know the voice of the true Messiah there is an awful difference. They recognize it as the voice of a dragon, a Satanic voice.

We have only to reflect on the position of the Jewish people at this crisis in order to see the fearful craft of the imposture. Just when the witnesses are proclaiming the reign of the coming Christ, and the overthrow of the Gentile power, Satan raises up a false Christ, with all the outward semblance of the true, as if in answer to their prophecy. No wonder that people without moral discernment are deceived.

Our Lord said, "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.) This prophecy now obtains a dreadful fulfilment. Of course Christ's sheep "know His voice, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of



strangers." (John 10: 4, 5.) This dragon voice has no attraction for their ears. They recognize not the voice for which their hearts are lunging, but the stranger from whom they must flee. Thus the real Israel, God's true saints, are delivered from Satan's wiles. But alas for the bulk of the people, ever ready to turn from God, ever ready to turn to man! They have rejected the true Shepherd, and now they greedily devour the pretensions of the "idol shepherd." They have refused "the Lamb of God," and now they willingly receive the wolf in sheep's clothing. The god of this world has found them a Messiah suited to their taste, one who calls for no repentance, one who flatters their vanity instead of rebuking their sin, one who promises them the deceitful desires of their own hearts instead of the rest that remaineth for the people of God; and to him they listen.

But it may be asked why, since Jerusalem is not named in this vision, it should be supposed that this second beast is at Jerusalem, or exercises his power among the Jews? The answer is, that the whole of this part of the book, and the whole interest of the time concerning which this prophecy is spoken, are connected with Jerusalem. In Revelation 7 we see a remnant of Israel sealed, in marked distinction from the Gentile multitude. In Revelation 10 Christ, asserting His rights to the earth, declares that God's purposes should be speedily accomplished on the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Now when the seventh trumpet sounds "the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, or Jehovah and his anointed, comes," and of this world-kingdom the metropolis is mount Zion, "the city of the great King." Accordingly, we find the state of things in Jerusalem, during the brief period before Christ's return, set forth in Revelation 11. It is there the witnesses prophecy; there the beast exercises his power; there the Gentiles trample the city under foot. Vast as is the beast's empire, the interest centres in Jerusalem, and its other parts are not even named. In the next chapter it is Israel that appears as the great object of Satan's fury; it is between Israel's foe and Israel's "great prince," the archangel Michael, that the war in heaven is waged; it is against the remnant of Israel that the dragon's wrath is directed when he is cast down to the earth. In this chapter, again, the beast, as Satan's tool, persecutes the saints against whom Satan's rage is turned, that is, the Jewish remnant. Everything, therefore, shows that God is now coming back to Israel, that the time is the brief period of Gentile oppression preceding Israel's deliverance, and that Jerusalem is the centre round which the events here symbolised cluster.

Jerusalem, then, is the stage on which the tragedy now

passing before us is enacted. We shall presently see other reasons, from a comparison with various prophecies, for connecting this second beast with that city; but for the time those we have already given will amply suffice. What then is the state of Jerusalem at this moment? We learn from many scriptures that Jerusalem will before its deliverance be in terrible straits from a foreign foe, who will in that day take the place of the ancient Assyrian, both in the loftiness of his pretensions and the ambitious designs he has against Palestine. This northern power, as we shall presently see, is threatening Jerusalem during the period spoken of in the Revelation. The unbelieving mass of the people, instead of looking to the Lord for deliverance, seek shelters as in ancient times, in worldly alliances; and this false Christ enters into league, on behalf of the Jewish people, with the head of the revived Roman Empire. It is this alliance that Isaiah foretells, "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. . . . For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, his strange work; and bring to pass His act, his strange act." (Isa. 28: 15-21.)

Here, then, we have the period before the Lord rises up in His power for the deliverance of His people. Their condition in that time is set forth. A mighty confederacy is rolling like a flood against the land, and threatening to overwhelm it. The true refuge is God Himself, who has laid in Zion a sure foundation-stone. The faithful ones can rest on this foundation, and awaiting their deliverance from the Messiah, "do not make haste." The rest of the people however, terrified and unbelieving, listen to the lies of the antichrist, and under his guidance seek refuge in a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, an alliance with the wicked head of the Gentile powers, the vice-regent of the dragon upon earth. It avails them not. The scourge still overflows, their refuge of lies fails, their covenant with death is

dissolved, and the Lord rises up in His power for the deliverance of His faithful people, and the judgment of all His enemies.

Now this prophecy in Isaiah exactly corresponds with what we find in the Revelation. There the false Christ becomes a sort of vassal or liege-man of the Gentile monarch. "And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." (vv. 12-14.)

Here, then, we see an alliance established between the false Christ and the Roman power. Satan has before, as in Job's case, called down fire from heaven. If his civil authority, as prince of this world, is given to the first beast, the miraculous power he is still permitted to exercise is given to the second. Thus we have the civil and ecclesiastical power both directed by Satan. The healing of the deadly wound, or the revival of the Roman Empire, is evidently regarded by the unbelieving Jews as a miraculous interposition of God on their behalf. False and diabolical as this power is, they are occupied only with their own safety; have no care for God's truth, no trust in God's salvation; and instead of resting on the sure foundation stone laid in Zion, they readily acknowledge as a Saviour any one who comes with promises of present deliverance. Hence this fatal refuge of lies, this ghastly covenant with death and agreement with hell.

The ancient Roman Emperors caused themselves to be worshipped as gods, and their images to be erected in the heathen temples. But there is a hideous feature about this new and debasing idolatry which at once marks Satan's power, and explains the greedy reception of the delusion by the multitude "And he," that is the second beast, "had power to give breath [not life] unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark — the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is

the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six." (vv. 15-18.) This is what things are coming to. The chains of Satan will be riveted on everything, body and soul. The witnesses of the Messiah will be put to death, though not till their testimony is finished. The faithful ones who have not succeeded in escaping to the wilderness must suffer martyrdom; for no person can be tolerated who does not worship the beast. All must confess themselves his vassals, and receive his mark, either his name or the number of his name. The wise will at the time understand the number of the beast's name, and the mode of reckoning it. But however the number is derived from the name, it is clear that it can only be got when the name is known. All efforts then to ascertain it before the beast is known are merely wasting time.

There is a striking resemblance between the false Christ here described and "the man of sin" named by Paul. He warns the Thessalonians against the delusion "that the day of the Lord is come" (for this is the true reading), and tells them that before its arrival there will be a falling away, "and that man of sin will be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped so that he [as God] sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. 2: 2-4.) At present this wickedness is checked by the Holy Ghost's presence on earth; but when the Church is caught up, the Holy Ghost will no longer be here, and all hindrance will "be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (vv. 7-12.) The place in which this "man of sin" shows himself is Jerusalem, where "the temple of God" is; and the time of his appearance is between the Church's removal and the day of the Lord. He lasts till Christ comes, when he is destroyed "with the spirit of His mouth." He claims to be a god in man's form; that is, to be what Christ alone can be; and this blasphemous pretension is supported by "power and signs and lying wonders" which he is especially inspired by Satan to perform. He thus deceives those who, having refused the truth, are now judicially given over by God to the delusions of this impostor, and

so bring upon themselves righteous judgment. In place, in time, in doom, in the character of his pretensions, in the nature of his powers, and in the success of his imposture, there is an exact correspondence between the two persons described in Thessalonians and in the Revelation.

In Daniel this false Messiah is also mentioned by the name of "the king." It is said, "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. 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. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces . . . and shall divide the land for gain. And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind." (Dan. 11: 36-40.)

Here is a king reigning in "the land," which when thus spoken of can only mean Palestine, the land about which Daniel was interested, and this prophecy spoken. He is "at the time of the end" and continues "till the indignation be accomplished," showing that he reigns in the last days of Gentile supremacy – until, God's indignation against Israel being ended, He once more restores her to favour. He is an Israelite; for he does not regard "the God of his fathers," an expression which in Daniel can only mean the patriarchs. Neither does he regard "the desire of women." The great desire of all Hebrew women was to give birth to the Messiah. Thus Mary was saluted by Gabriel as "highly favoured among women," when her miraculous conception of the Saviour was announced. In naming "the desire of women" between "the God of his fathers" and "any God," the connection shows that something analogous in nature, not something entirely different, is meant. Though an Israelite, he heeds neither Jehovah, the God of the nation; nor the Messiah, the hope of the nation; nor even the false gods to which the nation had so often turned. But he honours the God of forces, refer ring probably to the religious homage rendered by his direction to the beast, the head of the Roman Empire, and the embodiment of worldly power. In time and place, in blasphemy and self-exaltation, in rejection of God and the introduction of a new and dreadful idolatry, this king exactly corresponds with the false Christ of the Revelation and the man of sin of the Thessalonians. "The king of the north," too, who comes against him, shows the existence of that enemy against

whom the fatal alliance with the beast is formed.

#### OUR LORD'S PROPHECY.

We have now seen the character of the first beast, the head of the revived Roman Empire, to whom idolatrous worship is rendered, and of the second beast, the false Christ, who deceives the Jews, enforces the worship of the first beast and his image, and joins him in persecuting to death all who refuse this blasphemous homage. Two passages of Scripture throw important light on this dreadful time. The first is a prophecy of our Lord's, at parts of which we have already looked. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains. . . . For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. 24: 15-27.)

Now let us see under what circumstances this prophecy was uttered. Jesus had just told the Jews, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23: 38, 39.) He then foretells to His disciples the overthrow of the temple. After this his disciples gather round Him, and as Jews inquire, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" This "end of the age" was a perfectly well-understood phrase, signifying the termination of the existing age of Gentile rule, and therefore connected with the return of the Messiah, the period when the Jews would receive Him as coming "in the name of the Lord." It is in answer to this question that our Lord's prophecy, as reported in Matthew, was spoken. In Luke no doubt the prophecy is directed to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, but in Matthew both the question asked and the reply are different. Our Lord's prophecy had doubtless a double

meaning; and while Luke was led by the Spirit to select those parts referring to the siege of Jerusalem which was comparatively near, Matthew was led by this same Spirit to record those portions which answered the disciple's question about his own return and the end of the age.

The first part of the discourse is occupied with these "beginnings of sorrows" which we have already seen to correspond with the wars, famines, pestilences, and persecutions detailed under the first six seals. The second part, from which the above extract has been drawn, begins with an event of which Daniel had prophesied — "the abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place. The passage in Daniel is as follows: "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." (Dan. 12: 11, 12.) Daniel is here prophesying of the time of Israel's restoration and blessing, and is told that from the setting up of "the abomination that maketh desolate" to this period is twelve hundred and ninety, or thirteen hundred and thirty-five days. These times are just a little longer than the forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days, named in the Revelation, showing that there are three stages, one three and a half years after this event, and the other two following at intervals of thirty and seventy-five days respectively, before the full work of Israel's redemption and blessing is accomplished.

This passage in Matthew, then, teaches that there will be an abomination, which in Scripture means an idol, set up in the holy place, the temple at Jerusalem, about three and a half years before Israel's final deliverance. It is called an "abomination of desolation;" or an "abomination that maketh desolate," because, as we shall see from another prophecy, this return to idolatry is visited with misery and desolation upon the city of Jerusalem.

Let us now trace the correspondence between this prophecy of our Lord's, and the prophecies of the Revelation. In Matthew we have an idolatrous image set up in Jerusalem about three and a half years before the end of the Gentile rule. In the Revelation we have the same. In Matthew the faithful are warned, on the setting up of the image, to flee from Jerusalem to the mountains. In the Revelation they do flee. In Matthew a tribulation without parallel is described as happening during this period. In the Revelation, those who survive the judgments are said to have "come out of the great tribulation." In Matthew the time is, for the elect's sake, made short. In the

Revelation Satan is enraged "because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." In Matthew there arise false Christs working wonders and signs which, if it were possible, should deceive the very elect. In the Revelation the false Christ "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do." In Matthew people are seeking for a Christ, not to appear from heaven, but to be found on earth. In the Revelation they are following a false Christ who is altogether of the earth. Finally, in Matthew the scene closes by "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (v. 30.) In the Revelation the scene closes by Christ coming from heaven as King of kings, and Lord of lords, arrayed in glory and majesty, and accompanied by the armies of heaven. (Rev. 19: 11-16.)

#### DANIEL'S PROPHECY OF SEVENTY WEEKS.

The second prophecy to which allusion was made, as shedding a flood of light on this period, is the communication made by Gabriel to Daniel, in answer to the prophet's prayer and confession with respect to the guilt and ruin of his people. "Seventy weeks," he says, "are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." (Dan. 9: 24.) Now here, not only is Gabriel's message sent in answer to Daniel's prayer about his own people and his own city, but he expressly defines his communication as referring to "thy people," which is Israel, and "thy holy city," which is Jerusalem. These, therefore, are not merely comprehended in the scope of the prophecy, but are its immediate and exclusive objects. It is the transgression of Israel and Jerusalem that is to be finished, the sin of Israel and Jerusalem that is to be ended, reconciliation for Israel and Jerusalem that is to be made, everlasting righteousness for Israel and Jerusalem that is to be brought in. Who will say that this has happened? Israel is still "Lo-ammi," "not my people," and her reconciliation and restoration are still future. Until these are accomplished the prophecy remains unfulfilled. Till then, the people and the city are under the Gentile yoke. The reconciliation will take place when the Messiah comes to reign over the earth.

The Messianic kingdom is, therefore, the goal towards which the prophecy points. Seventy weeks are to be spent in dealing with Israel before this goal is reached. It is not said that these weeks were to begin at once, or were



to be continuous when they did begin. As a fact, they did not begin at once, and have not been continuous, It is quite consistent with the language of the prophecy that the work should be laid aside for a while, and then resumed; and indeed we shall see that the Jews, by their own act, interposed a break in the time, and caused God to delay the completion of His promised work for an indefinite, and as yet unexhausted, period.

Gabriel proceeds - "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times [or "the strait of time"]. And after [the] threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off *and shall have nothing*," as the margin correctly reads. (vv. 25, 26.) "The strait of time" may mean the shorter of the two periods. Evidently there is a purpose for dividing the whole space of sixty-nine weeks in this manner, and there can be little doubt that the seven weeks, or forty-nine years, was spent in rebuilding the city, and that the sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years, is the interval between the completion of this work and the Messiah. But this only accounts for sixty-nine weeks, and after this, whether immediately or not, Messiah is cut off and has nothing. Instead of taking His dominion, the point towards which the prophecy is looking, He Himself is cut off. To say that this is after the seventy weeks of the prophecy is to make the prophecy contradict itself. For it expressly says that the Messiah is cut off after "the sixty and two weeks," which makes, with the previous seven, sixty-nine in all; and what conceivable sense could there be in saying that Messiah was cut off after the sixty-nine weeks, if He was really cut off after the full period of seventy weeks had expired? There is obviously a term of one week, or seven years, remaining over, and necessary to complete the whole cycle after the Messiah's death. This fact, as well as the express language of the prophecy itself, shows that the work here spoken of, the finishing the transgression and making an end of sins, is not Christ's death upon the cross, or the redemption there accomplished, but another work altogether, the reconciliation and restoration of Israel, which, though of course resulting from Christ's death, is to take place at a later period.

Was there, then, any event that could be described as "finishing the transgression" of Israel and Jerusalem, or making an end of their sins, within seven years after Christ was cut off? Manifestly nothing of the kind.

Therefore this last week does not follow immediately on the other sixty-nine, but only after an interval. Nor is it difficult to account for this. In due time the Messiah who was to fulfil all their hopes presented Himself to Daniel's people; but these, instead of hailing Him as their deliverer, refused and crucified Him. Thus, after sixty-nine weeks, He was cut off, and had nothing, while His people invoked the guilt of His blood on their own heads. What marvel that God should take them at their word, visit them with terrible judgments, and set them aside while He gathered out a people from the Gentiles? But "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," and, therefore., after this grace to the Gentiles, or the church period, is over, He once more takes up his suspended work with Israel, and the last week runs its course. The message then proceeds – "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined," [or rather "unto the end, war, desolations, are determined"] (v. 26.) After the Messiah was cut off, terrible judgment fell on the Jews, The Roman army destroyed "the city and the sanctuary," with a fearful overthrow, compared to a flood, and from that time to the present wars and desolations have visited the city. These will continue to the end; that is, till the period towards which this prophecy looks forward. The Romans, who effected this destruction of Jerusalem, are described as "the people of the prince that shall come." This shows that "the prince that shall come" is not Christ, but a prince or sovereign of the Roman Empire. The prophecy goes on to speak more about this sovereign.

"And he shall confirm a covenant [not *the* covenant] with *the* many [not "many"] for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for [or "because of"] the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate [or "because of the overspreading of abominations, a desolator], even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (v. 27.) Now what is this week? The prophecy declares that seventy weeks are to be accomplished before the restoration and blessing of Jerusalem, and the bringing in of the Messianic kingdom. It says that after sixty-nine weeks the Messiah is cut off, not taking the kingdom. There remains, therefore, one week to be accounted for. The cutting off of the Messiah is followed by a long interval, during which the temple is destroyed, and wars and desolations visit the city. After this another week is named. What can this week be but the seventieth week, as yet unaccounted for, and now emerging. as it were, out of this long interval

of ruin and desolation, to complete the unfulfilled period of prophecy? As each of the other weeks meant a term of seven years, this last week must clearly mean a term of seven years also. The period following Christ's rejection is, therefore, to culminate in a short term of seven years, the seventieth week, of which the events are here foretold.

"And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week." During this week there is to be a covenant between some person here referred to and "the many." Who is this person? and who are "the many"? The person is the one last named, "the prince that shall come." We have already seen that this prince is the head of the Roman Empire; for he is the prince of the people that destroyed Jerusalem. But he is not Titus, or any past Roman Emperor; for certainly none of these, after the destruction of Jerusalem, formed any compact with the Jews. Besides, this prince reigns in the last week, or seven years, before the Messianic kingdom. He can therefore be none other than the little horn elsewhere named by our prophet, or the first beast of the Revelation. This last head of the Roman Empire enters into a covenant with "the many," meaning the mass or bulk of some people. As the whole subject of the prophecy is Daniel's people and Daniel's city, this must mean the Jews. The nature of the covenant confirms this: for in the middle of the week he breaks the covenant, causes "the sacrifice and oblation to cease," and sets up some abomination or idol. Now the sacrifice and oblation can only mean the Jewish ritual and worship restored, which shows that this covenant was with the Jews, and that the "prince" has power in Jerusalem.

The events of the last week are therefore as follows: The head of the Roman Empire forms a league with the bulk of the Jewish people for seven years, in virtue of which they are to observe their own religion, doubtless under his protection. But in the middle of the week, that is, three and a half years before the Messiah's reign, he breaks the covenant, causes the worship of Jehovah to cease, and sets up some idol or abomination as an object of divine homage. The next clause should read, "On account of the overspreading (or protection) of abominations, a desolator." This means that God punishes the idolatry by sending a desolating army against Jerusalem. Hence the abomination is elsewhere spoken of by the same prophet as "the abomination that maketh desolate," and by our Lord as the abomination of desolation." This desolator is the Assyrian, or king of the north, the "overflowing scourge" against which the unbelieving Jews seek to protect themselves by a covenant

with death and an agreement with hell; or in other words, a treaty with this agent of the dragon and blasphemer of God named in the Revelation. The false Christ, their pretended prophet and king, is Satan's instrument in forming this deadly alliance, and in afterwards imposing upon them that idolatrous worship of the beast and his image which brings the desolator against the city.

This lasts "until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." The desolate is Jerusalem. Her deliverance and the full end of her woes come at the very moment when the desolating force is flushed with triumph, when it has taken and sacked the city, and carried off half its inhabitants. For the Lord says, "I will gather all the nations [or Gentiles] against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall Jehovah go forth, and fight against those nations [Gentiles], as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem." A mode of escape is then provided for His people, and the result is that "Jehovah shall be King over all the earth." (Zech. 14: 1-9.) This is "the consummation," when the determined judgment having at length been "poured upon the desolate," she is again restored to favour and blessing. "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah (my delight is in her), and thy land Beulah" (married). (Isa. 62: 4.)

The coincidence between this prophecy of the seventy weeks and those previously looked at is most striking. The little horn in Daniel speaks great things against the Most High, wears out His saints, and changes times and laws, for a time, and times, and the dividing of time; that is, for three and a half years. The seven-headed beast in the Revelation blasphemes God, makes war against the saints, and receives idolatrous worship for forty and two months; that is, for three and a half years. The prince that shall come breaks covenant with the Jews, abolishes the worship of Jehovah, and establishes idolatry in the temple for half a week; that is, for three and a half years.

The little horn is the last ruler arising out of the fourth beast; that is, the last prince of the Roman Empire. The seven-headed beast is the last ruler of the city of seven hills; that is, the last prince of the Roman Empire. The prince that shall come is the last

ruler of the people that destroyed Jerusalem and the temple; that is, the last prince of the Roman Empire.

The little horn continues till the kingdom is given to One like unto the Son of man; that is, he endures till the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. The seven-headed beast continues till Christ issues forth with the armies of heaven to destroy him, and set up His own dominion on the earth; that is, he endures till the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. The prince that shall come reigns during the last half-week before the deliverance of Jerusalem and the restoration of Israel; that is, he endures till the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

In every respect the coincidence is complete. The three persons severally described as the little horn, the seven-headed beast, and the prince that shall come, are all rulers over the same empire reign at the same epoch, endure for the same time, possess the same character, perform the same deeds, and suffer the same destruction. Every date, incident, and characteristic prove them to be the same person.

ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY DAYS.

The last prophecy of the seventy weeks will enable us to settle an important question as to whether the days spoken of in these prophecies mean days or, as is often assumed, years. The woman who flies into the wilderness is said (Rev. 12: 14) to be nourished there "for a time, and times, and half a time," and in verse 6, to be fed for "a thousand two hundred and three score days." The words "a time, and times, and half a time" mean therefore twelve hundred and sixty days; and as these words are taken from the Greek version of Daniel, the words used by the prophet, and translated "a time, and times, and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7: 25) have the same signification. This, according to the Jewish reckoning, in which a year contains twelve months of thirty days each, is just forty-two months, or three and a half years, or one-half of a week of seven years.

Now we have seen that the last half-week in the prophecy of the seventy weeks represents a period of three and a half years. It is during this time that the wickedness and idolatry of the beast manifest themselves. It is of this time then, and not of any more lengthened period, that the Revelation speaks. This is the time that Jerusalem is trodden under foot after it first appears as the centre of God's purposes. This is the time that the

witnesses prophesy. This is the time that the persecuted saints flying to the wilderness are cared for by God. This is the time that the idol is set up in Jerusalem. This is the time that the little horn flourishes. This is the time that the beast has power given him over all kindreds and nations. All falls within the last half-week, or one thousand two hundred and three score days, which closes Gentile rule, completes God's judgment of His chosen people, and ushers in the Messiah's reign.

Availing ourselves of the light which these prophecies cast upon the passage now before us from the Revelation, we see clearly the history of that period of three and a half years with which this portion of the Word is concerned. The Roman Empire will have revived, under the headship of a great and powerful prince; while a person endowed by Satan with miraculous gifts, will set himself forth as the expected Christ, and will gain ascendancy over the mass of the Jews. These will have already returned to Jerusalem, mostly in unbelief, and there rebuilt the temple, and re-established the ancient worship and sacrifices. A great power, answering to the Assyrian of old, under "the king of the north," will then threaten the returned people. To protect themselves against this power the mass of the nation, led by the false Christ, will form a treaty for seven years with the great prince ruling the revived Roman Empire. By this treaty the Jews will be guaranteed in the exercise of their religious rites. Meanwhile, however, a new testimony to Christ will spring up among a number of Jews, who reject the claims of the false Messiah.

But in the middle of the seven years a great event happens in heaven. Satan is cast down to the earth, and, being full of malice against the Lord's people, who have begun to testify concerning the coming Messiah, stirs up the Roman prince and the false Christ against them. The Roman prince, wielding Satan's gigantic power, breaks his covenant with the unbelieving Jews, represses the worship of Jehovah, and forces them to embrace idolatry. In this undertaking he is aided by the false Christ, who, using all his miraculous skill, deceives his followers, and persuades them to set up and worship an image of the Roman prince. On the erection of this image the believing Jews, who are looking for the Messiah, make their escape with all haste out of the city, and seek a refuge in the wilderness, where, in spite of Satan's efforts for their destruction, they are providentially sheltered and tended by God during the remaining three and a half years of the Roman prince's ascendancy. Others, however, unable to flee, or detained by God as witnesses, are left behind in Jerusalem, where they are persecuted to death at the hand

of the false Christ and his Roman confederate.

Meanwhile the alliance between the prince and the unbelieving Jews does not prevent the invasion of the northern army, which, on account of the revived idolatry, comes as an overflowing scourge, spreads desolation over the land, and has already captured the city, when Christ suddenly descends for the relief of His faithful people. His startling appearance changes the whole scene. The northern army is destroyed. The Roman prince and the false Christ, though at a different time, are cut off. The faithful remnant of the Jews are restored, and with the remnant of Israel, blessed under the Messianic reign. These results we gather from other scriptures. The Revelation only deals with the judgment of the Roman prince and the false Christ with their followers, which is related in a subsequent part of the book. Meanwhile other scenes open before us.

#### RESULTS AND WARNINGS.

#### Revelation 14.

During the events related in the two preceding chapters God only works, as it were, behind the scenes. The time for showing himself to Israel has not yet arrived, though they have once more become the centre of his counsels and the objects of His sheltering care. There is now a break, during which the history of His controversy with their oppressors is suspended, until other preliminary judgments, in one of which the beast and his confederates play an important part, are brought before our view. In this chapter we have disclosed, first, the blessing of the Jewish remnant, and secondly, the threatenings and promises of God sent forth during this brief but eventful period. The blessing of the Jewish remnant on earth is not the subject of the book, but is brought in parenthetically to cheer the hearts and uphold the faith of the saints amidst the unparalleled sufferings through which they are passing.

#### THE JEWISH REMNANT.

(Verses 1-5.)

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name [or, "His name and His Father's name"] written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice [or, "and

the voice which I heard was, as it were,"] of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault" [before the throne of God]. (vv. 1-5.)

This scene is, like the vision of the palm-bearing multitude, anticipative. The Spirit looks forward, and gives a glimpse of the millennial blessing and glory of that faithful remnant which we recently saw groaning beneath the persecution of the Roman prince and his crafty coadjutor. We have beheld the deluded followers of the false lamb; we now behold the faithful followers of the true Lamb. Jehovah has held all the rage of men in derision, and after vexing them in His sore displeasure, has seated His King on His holy hill of Zion. There God's Anointed is seen, with a multitude of His people, symbolized by the mystical number one hundred and forty and four thousand, the highest order of administrative perfection, gathered around Him. As the followers of the false Christ had received a mark in their forehead, so these followers of the true Christ have His name and His Father's written in their forehead. The name in the forehead signifies that they bear the moral impress of the One whose lordship they acknowledge. The followers of "the man of the earth" bear his image; the followers of Christ bear His. Heaven rejoices over their deliverance and, blessing, as it rejoiced when Satan was cast down to the earth. The heavenly saints then owned these suffering ones as their "brethren," and gave thanks that their accuser was driven from heaven. They now participate in their joy as those who have triumphed over him on the earth.

A new song, which only they can learn, rises from these conquerors to the throne of God, surrounded by the living creatures and the elders. For there is a special joy belonging to those who have passed through the furnace of affliction. Several passages of Scripture seem to indicate that the ten tribes will be gathered after Jerusalem is delivered, while the Jews, who rejected Christ, will be gathered before, and will there endure the full heat of the great tribulation. No doubt it will try all the world with more or less intensity; but its most scorching rays will fall upon the Jews, and it is



apparently of the redeemed Jews that this select band consists. Of the faithful portion of the Jewish people there are two classes, the martyrs who suffer death, and the remnant who escape. The blessed fate of the martyrs is presently revealed; but we here see the triumph and joy of those who survive. Others will share the blessings of the millennial reign, but none will taste all its sweetness like those who have drained the bitter cup of the preceding sorrows. To none will such special nearness to the throne be possible as to those who have tested God's strength and faithfulness in the hour of sorest need.

These were in the midst of "the dwellers on the earth;" but they have been "redeemed from the earth," and now know the blessedness of "following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Like Him, in the days of His flesh, they have been a separated people, virgins holding aloof from the defilements of the world; and now they are the first-fruits of this new harvest of His redemption-toil. They have held and practised the truth; for "in their mouth was found no guile" or lie, while all the world was going after the falsehood of the beast. They have too been without fault, blameless, while all the world has been loving and living in unrighteousness. It does not say that they are "without fault before the throne of God," as in our translation; for though as believers their sins are all put away, that is not the question here. But the character of their walk is blameless, just as that of believers should be now, in distinction from the wickedness and corruption of the world around.

#### THE THREE ANGELS.

(Verses 8-12.)

Having refreshed our gaze with a glimpse of the glories awaiting the saved remnant when the Lamb is seated on mount Zion, the ever-shifting series of visions returns to the troubles and woes of the great tribulation. In the two preceding chapters we have seen the visible agents at work; but though God's hand is not yet disclosed, He is guiding all things silently for His own glory and His people's salvation, making the wrath of men, and even the malice of Satan, all to praise Him. Not yet being in acknowledged relationship with His people, He speaks through angels, and in this manner forewarns them of the judgments about to come upon the world.

First Angel. "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." (vv. 6, 7.)

Such is the first angelic voice. In the midst of man's wickedness God gives a call to repentance. While man is turning to idols, and worshipping the creature more than the Creator, God asserts once more His rights as Creator to the worship of those whom He has made. It is not here the gospel of His grace, but "the everlasting gospel," the claim of God on man as his Creator independent of all dispensations.

Neither we nor the millennial saints could worship God simply on the grounds on which His claim is here made to rest. We worship Him as a heavenly people redeemed by grace; the millennial saints will worship Him as a earthly people redeemed by grace; the remnant, during the great tribulation, will worship Him as the God of the promises, from whom they look for deliverance and blessing. But in this message to the dwellers upon the earth, whose hearts are now given up to idolatry, God asserts the double claim which Paul pressed upon the people of Athens – His claim as Creator, and His claim as Judge. He demands the worship now diverted from Him to idols, and warns them that the hour of His judgment is at hand.

Second Angel. "And there followed another [a second] angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." (v. 8) If God's judgment is coming on all the earth, there are two systems specially marked out for visitation. In the address to the Church at Thyatira we saw "the depths of Satan" in connection with a profession of Christianity, and learnt the dreadful doom awaiting those who had corrupted themselves with Jezebel. As long as the Holy Ghost is on earth evil is more or less restrained; and during this time no religious system, however corrupt, is called "Babylon." But after the Holy Ghost is withdrawn the empty profession comes out in all its falsehood and rottenness. Then it is that the nominal Church, no longer seasoned with the salt of true believers, becomes the offensive mass of corruption to which the name Babylon is given. Then it is that God's judgment on the false system is executed. Here we have the warning given, the details and instruments of the judgment being recorded in a future chapter.

Third Angel. "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night who worship the. beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: [here are they] that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (vv. 9-12.) Offensive as Babylon is to God, there is something even worse. The idolatry and blasphemy of the beast, the direct agent of Satan, is the climax of human apostacy and rebellion; and terrible is the judgment here foretold as awaiting it. Is this, then, a mere fancy picture? Alas! it is not even a picture of far-distant events. We are told to be looking for the Lord's coming to take believers to Himself. Then "the door is shut." This may be at any moment, and what then? Satan's energy for evil redoubled; the Holy Ghost's energy for good withdrawn; man given up to his own will; strong delusion, judicially sent by God to blind the eyes of those who had refused the truth; the followers of the deceiver lost for ever. Well may this gloomy picture sustain the patience of those who keep God's commandments, and hold the faith of Jesus! They may suffer grievously for their refusal to worship the beast and his image; but what are these sufferings compared with the eternal torments of those who, listening to the voice of present ease, become partakers in this blasphemous idolatry?

There is a manifest connection between the voices of these three angels. The world is divided between a lifeless superstition, having the form without the power, the name without the spirit, of Christianity, and a horrible, blasphemous form of creature-worship organized by Satan and his instruments. God first meets this by calling upon men to worship Him as Creator, the One who as man's Maker has a claim on his service, and as man's Judge will soon visit the world. He next warns men of the two things on which the lightnings of His judgment will descend with their most scathing force, the two forms of evil already spoken of. The fall of Babylon, the corrupt remnant of the Church after true believers are removed, is first announced; and then the awful doom of those who follow the delusions of the false Christ, and become the worshippers of the beast and his image.

THE BLESSED DEAD.

(Verse 13.)

And I heard a voice from heaven saying [unto me], Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and [or "for"] their works do follow them." This passage is often quoted with respect to departed believers, nor would anybody question its general applicability. But if we would rightly divide the word of truth we must beware of supposing that all the texts which are applicable to Christians were written about them. Here the words "from henceforth" show that a particular time is referred to, and that something more is meant than a mere general statement of the truth concerning the blessedness of the believing dead.

Nor, if we understand God's dealings at the period here spoken of, will there be any difficulty in seeing the special meaning intended. A thick cloud of moral and spiritual darkness is at this moment brooding over the earth, the Holy Ghost withdrawn, Satan working with awful energy and success in blinding the eyes of men, and human presumption and rebellion against God rising to its highest pitch. In this chapter we have revealed the blessed lot of those who hold the truth through this period of darkness, and then the dreadful fate of those who follow the two classes of delusion prevailing in the earth. But there is another class, those who hold the truth and yet perish during the miseries and persecutions of this disastrous time. These are the blessed dead here spoken of. They have had to choose between receiving the mark of the beast and death, and have chosen death. What then will be their portion?

This might seem an easy question, and if the reference were to our dispensation it could hardly have arisen. At present believers are a heavenly people, and should they die before the Lord comes, it is only another mode of being with Christ - "to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." But in the time of which this part of the Revelation treats, believers are not a heavenly people. Instead of waiting to be taken to heaven, they are waiting to be blessed on the earth. This is their proper Scriptural hope. Moreover, though quickened, they are not sealed with the Holy Spirit, and have, therefore, neither the full assurance of salvation, nor the earnest of an inheritance to be shared with Christ. Death, accordingly, comes to them, not as a fulfilment, but as a frustration, of their hopes; not as introducing them to, but taking them from, their own proper promises. Hence a special word is needed, and is here sent, from God, to assure them of blessedness in

another form. True the fruit of their labours is lost here, but it will be reaped in heaven, "for their works do follow them," and in the meanwhile all their toils and sufferings down here are brought to an end.

#### THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE JUDGMENTS.

(Verses 14-20.)

Having shown the blessings of the faithful survivors, and also of the martyrs, during this period; having warned men of the solemn retribution about to fall upon Babylon and the followers of the beast, another class of judgments overhanging the world is now unfolded. They are of two sorts, represented respectively under the figures of the harvest and the vintage of the earth.

The Harvest. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." (vv. 14-16.)

A prophecy in Joel will cast light on this and the next vision. "Let the Gentiles be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the Gentiles round about. *Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down, for the press is full, the fats overflow,* for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (or threshing): for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." (Joel 3: 12-17.)

It is clear that the scenes in the Revelation are taken from this prophecy, and describe the accomplishment of the events here foretold. We learn, therefore, the time, connection, and object of these judgments. The time is the advent of the day of the Lord, the period when He judges the Gentiles and restores Israel. Here, therefore,

we see Israel to be the centre of His purposes, Jerusalem the centre of His interests, Zion the centre of His government. The Gentiles, who have long oppressed them, are gathered for judgment, and the power and glory of Jehovah are manifested on the side of His chosen people, and issue forth from His chosen city. God has permitted the Gentiles to have their day, and the pass to which they have brought things is the terrible blasphemy and wickedness of the beast acting under Satanic inspiration. At this point He must intervene in judgment – "the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Everything is connected with Israel and the Messianic reign. It is an angel coming forth from the temple – that temple in the heavens where the ark of God's covenant was lately beheld – that bids the judgment commence. It is the Son of man that executes this judgment. This is the title in which Christ takes the kingdom from God's hand (Dan. 7: 13, 14), intervenes for the deliverance of his chosen people (Ps. 80: 17, 18; Luke 21: 27, 28), and has all things put under His feet. (Ps. 8: 4-6; Heb. 2: 5, 6.) As Son of man He now sits upon a white cloud, as He had foretold that He would come for Israel's salvation. As the Anointed of God He wears a golden crown, and carries a sharp sickle as the executor of righteous judgment on the earth. By Him "the harvest of the earth is reaped."

The Vintage. "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and he cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." (vv. 17-20.)

There are two kinds of judgment spoken of by the prophets and our Lord – the one a judicial process discriminating between the wicked and the good; the other a terrible outpouring of wrath against open and avowed enemies. The nations summoned before the throne of glory where the Son of man sits, and divided into two companies on the right hand and on the left, are dealt with in the former way. The armies of the beast and the false prophet of the Assyrian and of Gog, are dealt with in the latter. These are the two sorts of judgment foreshadowed in these two

visions. The figure of the harvest suggests the judicial inquiry, the separation of the wheat from the hires, and the binding up in separate bundles. The figure of the wine-press suggests the desolating and unsparing storm of divine indignation which shall devour His adversaries. The angel who bids the harvest commence comes out of the temple, a fit place from which to demand a holy, discriminating judgment. But the angel in the vintage scene comes "out of the altar," the place of consuming judgment, and has "power over fire," the symbol of devouring wrath, in the discriminating judgment Christ appears as the Son of man, the character in which He will summon the Gentiles to His tribunal, and divide the sheep from the goats. In the second He appears only in His angelic character, as the Psalmist prays, "Let them be as chaff before the wind, and let the angel of Jehovah chase them." (Ps. 35: 5.)

The passage in Joel clearly shows that the subject is the judgment of the Gentiles. The harvest judgment has, as we have seen, at least a part of its fulfilment in the scene described in Matthew 25, where the Gentiles are arraigned before Christ's tribunal and dealt with according to their treatment of the faithful Jews. The vintage judgment takes place outside "the city," and as no other city has yet been named, this can only be Jerusalem, where the Lord's open and avowed enemies are gathered in hostility to His chosen people. The wine-press is trodden there, and blood flows for a "space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs" — a vivid and awful picture of the wholesale destruction of the armies assembled against Jerusalem, through the two hundred miles, or whole length, of the Holy Land. In both cases it is a judgment of the Gentiles, the enemies of Jerusalem and of God's chosen people, preparatory to the establishment of the Messianic reign.

#### THE VIALS.

Revelation 15, 16.

The last chapter was parenthetical. After showing man's ways on the earth, God turns aside, as it were, to let us know His own purposes before they are carried into execution. He takes us forward in spirit therefore to see what will be the blessed lot of those saints who escape with life from the persecutions of the beast. Then, after asserting His own claims to worship as Creator and Judge, He announces the doom about to fall upon Babylon and upon the followers of the beast, and at the same time promises a special blessing to those who die for their

faithfulness during this period of tribulation. Finally, He declares how He will deal, whether in discriminating or in unsparing judgment, with the Gentiles.

Having thus shown His general purposes, He resumes the thread of the narrative, dealing, first, with the closing series of preliminary judgments which precede the coming of the Son of man; then, in fuller detail, with the overthrow of Babylon; and lastly, with the destruction of the beast and false prophet when Christ actually appears. But there is another subject, dear to the Lord's heart, with which He also deals. The blessedness of the "dead which die in the Lord" was one of the themes named in the previous chapter; and after just referring to the last plagues, before their dreadful character is detailed, another welcome break in the gathering cloud of judgment discloses a blessed vision of these victorious ones in the presence of God.

The narrative begins – "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." (Rev. 16: 1.) We see, therefore, that we are drawing to the close of these preliminary judgments; but having furnished this landmark to show where we are, the Spirit now leads us aside to contemplate another scene.

#### THE BLESSED DEAD IN HEAVEN.

(Rev. 15: 2-4.)

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image [and over his mark], and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of [not saints, but] the nations. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations [or all *the* nations] shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." This is not a vision of earthly blessedness, for "the sea of glass like unto crystal" is, as we learn from the fourth chapter, before the throne in heaven. On earth there is always need of cleansing, and there we have the brazen sea filled with water; but in heaven there is fixed, perfect purity which nothing can defile. Here it is mingled with fire, indicating probably the fiery trials through which these conquerors had passed. The purity they have now attained



has been got through the fire in which they have been tried as gold.

These conquerors have "gotten the victory over the beast." What a change! Looked at from man's side, the beast had made war with them, "and overcome them." Looked at from God's side, they have "gotten the victory over the beast." On earth the cry is, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" In heaven the song is, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" God is always victorious in the end, and so are those who trust Him. These saints, who died rather than worship the beast and his image, are now singing praises in the presence of God, while those who worship the beast "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb."

The victors "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." The song of Moses is the triumphant chant raised on the shores of the Red Sea, when Israel, delivered from the oppression of Egypt, had been brought safely through the deep waters, and beheld the waves closing over the pursuing host. So had these saints been delivered from this scene of persecution, brought through death, and now looked back on the judgment of their foes. The song of the Lamb is the song, not of redemption, but of the triumphs which belong to Christ as the meek and lowly One, now exalted in the earth. God is addressed by His Old Testament name, Lord God Almighty. These saints say nothing about being made kings and priests, or about reigning over the earth. It is the reign of Jehovah, the Almighty, as King over "the nations," or Gentiles, and His righteous judgments in the earth, that fill their hearts with joy. The whole scene is Jewish and millennial in character. They rejoice that the Gentiles come and worship before God, not through gradual conversion, but because His "judgments are made manifest." "For when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isa. 26: 9.)

#### THE TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.

(Verses 5-8)

Having refreshed our eyes, as it were, with this glimpse of heavenly light, we return now to the midnight darkness in which the world is still wrapped. The scene, indeed, is yet in heaven, but derives its colour from the earth, for whose judgment preparation is being made. "And after

that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."

Again "the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven" is the place from which God acts. This is the place in which the ark of God's covenant with Israel was lately seen, the place from which the judgment of the Gentiles was lately demanded. This shows, though figuratively, what is in God's thoughts; that in the plagues He is now about to pour forth on the earth, He is acting in view of His relationship with Israel, the nation with which His covenant is established. Now, though the temple is there, it is filled with smoke. So had Isaiah seen the earthly temple, when the Lord came to announce the desolation of Israel. (Isa. 6: 4.) So had God shown Himself to His people, at the giving of the law, when "mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." (Ex. 19: 18.) God, dealing with man in righteous judgment is necessarily "a consuming fire." The world has rejected grace, and refused the call to repentance; and now God is about to vindicate His righteousness. The temple in heaven is opened, but not for intercession. It is filled with the smoke of that consuming fire which God will now show Himself to be, and no man can enter until His righteous indignation has been poured forth. Seven ministers of His judgments, clothed in white linen, the garb of spotless purity, and girt with the golden girdles of divine righteousness, carry forth the full vials of His wrath. It is "the wrath of God who liveth for ever and ever," of Jehovah, the God of Israel, that is here stored up. One of the living creatures, the executors of His providential judgments, hands the vials to the seven angels.

#### GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE VIAL JUDGMENTS.

(Rev. 16: 1.)

"And I heard a great voice [out of the temple] saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of

the wrath of God upon the earth." Before examining the vials in detail, it may be well to make a few remarks about their general character. The number here, as in the seals and trumpets, is seven. But while the trumpet judgments are the development of the seventh seal, the vials are not a development of the seventh trumpet. The seventh trumpet brings us down to Christ's coming in power and glory, and its development, therefore, is not given in detail until other events, also preceding this great consummation, have been recorded. The vial series runs, so to speak, to the same terminus, being "the seven last plagues." They are, therefore, in whole or in part, contemporaneous with the trumpet judgments. The stress which is laid, however, on their final character, as filling up the wrath of God, suggests that though terminating at the same time as the trumpets, they begin later, and occupy, therefore, a shorter period.

Comparing the vials with the trumpets, there is a singular parallelism. The first trumpet judgment affects the earth; so does the first vial. The second trumpet affects the sea; so does the second vial. The third trumpet affects the rivers and fountains; so does the third vial. The fourth trumpet affects the heavenly bodies; so does the fourth vial. The fifth trumpet brings darkness and torment without death; so does the fifth vial. The sixth trumpet announces invasion from the Euphrates; so does the sixth vial. The seventh trumpet ushers in the reign of Christ; so does the seventh vial. No doubt there are great differences, and as a general rule the vial judgments are severer and more extensive than those under the trumpets. Still the general parallelism, coupled with the shorter duration of the vial judgments, seems to indicate that towards the close the trumpet series become aggravated in character, plagues of the same nature being either increased in intensity or widened in area. Such would seem to be the general character of these vial judgments.

FIRST VIAL.

(Verse 2.)

"And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." Here, as in the first trumpet, the scene affected is the earth, the region of ordered government. Whether the plague be literally or figuratively understood, it obviously refers to some painful and humiliating visitation on those who had

worshipped the beast and owned themselves his vassals. There is no difficulty in understanding the plague literally. Similar visitations had marked God's displeasure with the Egyptians and with the Philistines; for God will abase the proud, and pour contempt on the lofty. But from the general symbolic character of the book, one would rather conclude, that while in this and other cases the plagues of Egypt furnish the figures, the judgments here named are to be less literally understood. It is so undoubtedly in the plagues that follow, and we may, therefore, infer that in this instance also the sore is rather in mind and circumstances than an actual bodily infliction, some deep, fretting trouble falling on the worshippers of the beast and his image. God has various judgments to inflict. The revival of idolatry is one sin to be judged, and its votaries are, therefore, sorely visited. This is the special object of the first plague.

#### SECOND VIAL.

(Verse 3.)

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea." Here, as before, the sea stands for the great mass of the peoples; for God's judgments are not confined to the beast and his followers. Throughout its whole surface the world is reddened with war and bloodshed, signified in the ghastly picture of the sea becoming like the blood of a dead man, and all its living creatures being destroyed. Such is the import of the second plague.

#### THIRD VIAL.

(Verses 4-7.)

"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood" (v. 4) Here, as in the third trumpet, the rivers and fountains represent the springs and sources of human refreshment. Under the trumpet these were corrupted and embittered over a third part of the earth. Under these severer visitations they are not only corrupted, but turned to death, becoming blood, and that not only over a third part of the globe, but generally. The voice of intelligent creation acquiesces in the righteousness of this judgment. "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous [O Lord], which art, and wast, and shalt be [or "which art, and wast holy"], because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints

and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard [another out of] the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments" (vv. 5-7) Though no special portion of the world is signified, it seems that this judgment is aimed chiefly at those who have persecuted the prophets and saints. The voice from the altar is most suggestive; for beneath that altar were seen in a former vision "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Now this altar, where they had presented their bodies as a sacrifice to God, having once witnessed their sufferings, rejoices in the righteous retribution which overtakes their persecutors.

#### FOURTH VIAL.

(Verses 8, 9.)

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give Him glory." As the sun represents supreme authority, this plague indicates the pressure of intense tyranny — the nations groaning beneath the fierce rays of oppressive power exercised by the ruler of this period. In the fourth trumpet the sun is not intensified in heat, but partially darkened. From this one may perhaps gather that the anarchy and confusion implied in the trumpet judgment ends in a period of intense oppression and suffering, just as, for example, the total subversion of all authority in the French Revolution culminated in the blood-thirsty tyranny of the reign of terror. But the most solemn feature of the whole scene is that man, though recognizing God as the author of these plagues, is only hardened in rebellion against Him. Instead of repenting and turning to Him, he breaks out in still more awful blasphemy against his name.

#### FIFTH VIAL.

(Verses 10, 11.)

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat [throne] of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." Such is man when left to himself with Satan for his guide. Here we see the fabric he has reared for himself under the

direction of the God of this world. Science and art, civilization and culture, all that, according to modern thought, humanizes, refines, and elevates our race — freedom, with all its benefits, leaving man to work out his own destiny — all this brought to bear on his circumstances; and what is the result? In Western Europe, the chosen home of civilization, liberty, enlightenment, and progress, the result is the kingdom of the beast, the focus of tyranny, darkness, misery, and blasphemy. And why? Because man has left God out of account. "God is not in all his thoughts." Independence of God was the cause of his fall, the beginning of all his ruin and wretchedness. Independence of God will culminate in all the miseries of this disastrous time. The darkness here is doubtless moral, or rather spiritual; men groping in their blindness for some refuge from their gnawing misery, and yet so deluded by Satan that instead of turning to the only Deliverer, they blaspheme His name, and persist in the sins which have provoked His judgments. But alas! a still worse madness remains to be brought out.

#### SIXTH VIAL.

(Verses 12-16.)

"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. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And he [or "they"] gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." We need not understand this, any more than the previous judgments, literally. The Euphrates was the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. The drying up of its waters, then, to make a way for the kings of the East is a natural figure for the breaking down of that boundary-line of the revived empire under the beast.

The kings of the east probably signify a confederacy of eastern powers under the king who takes the place of the ancient Assyrian. In opposition to Egypt their leader is styled the king of the north. In opposition to the revived Roman Empire, the confederates are styled "the

kings of the east." We have seen that such a power will be arrayed against Jerusalem, which seeks aid in the disastrous alliance with the beast, the head of the revived Roman Empire. It is by God's counsel that all the nations are thus gathered "against Jerusalem to battle," but God makes the dragon and men's evil passions to work out his own will. Just as He bade the lying spirit go and lure Ahab to his fall, just as He sends men in this dreadful time "strong delusion that they should believe a lie," so here He uses the unclean spirits out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, to draw together this assemblage of powers, "the clusters of the vine of the earth," to be trodden in the wine-press of His righteous indignation. Doubtless to men's eyes the war will be declared with the usual exchange of diplomatic dispatches, and the usual protests of disinterested intentions. But the Spirit of God unmask the true motives at work, and shows that the real agents in this great gathering are demons, diabolic counsels, from the heart of Satan and his wicked instruments. By these the war is stirred up, and God's purpose accomplished. The kings of the east gather their forces, and invade the frontier of the beast's dominions. The beast, in concert with the kings of the west, also gathers his forces, and marches to the fatal field of Armageddon.

Whatever doubt there may be as to the exact meaning of this word, there is none as to the fact that it refers in some way or other to the valley of Megiddo. Here it was that the most formidable Gentile oppressors were overthrown, when God arose for the deliverance of His people. Here it was that "the kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." (Judges 5: 19, 20.) It is obvious how admirable a type this furnishes of the great battle yet to come, when Christ shall descend from heaven for the deliverance of His people, the destruction of His enemies, and the establishment of His glorious rule. We learn elsewhere, that the Gentile will be gathered in the Holy Land, but the name Armageddon probably refers less to the place than to the character of their overthrow, as typified in the great battle "by the waters of Megiddo."

Thus the world's misery seems to culminate. Who can fathom the distress of the saints, or the groans that ascend — "How long?" But the day of deliverance is at hand. Little do the gathering forces imagine that instead of encountering each other, they will meet the One whose claims they have despised, whose saints they have

persecuted, whose name they have blasphemed; that He is coming to take the crown "whose right it is;" that the land they have destined for their spoil God has destined for their sepulchre. Little do the beast and his still more wicked coadjutor dream that from that field of slaughter to which they are hastening they will be carried captives, and hurled without death into the eternal torments of the lake of fire. Little do the groaning saints, hid among the mountains and caves, dare to hope that now at last they may lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh. How cheering, then, yet how solemn, drop the words, like a momentary lull in the wildest fury of the storm, "Behold, I come as a thief" What a fearful surprise for "the inhabitants of the earth," who still, amidst all the convulsions, pursue their own way, and dream of a good time yet before them! What a joyful surprise for the suffering saints, thus to behold their Deliverer appearing in the moment of their deepest gloom! Well may He warn them to be on the watch, and to keep their garments that they be not found naked.

#### SEVENTH VIAL

(Verses 17-21.)

"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. 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. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of us wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great."

Here, then, the preliminary judgments come to an end. The vial is poured out into the air, the scene of Satan's authority; for he is "the prince of the power of the air." Mighty results follow. God, speaking from the throne out of the temple in which the ark of the covenant is placed, declares that the work is done. What work? The work towards which all God's schemes of earthly government have been directed, the work of which the ark of the covenant was a constant memorial, the work of setting his King upon His holy hill of Zion, and making Jerusalem a joy and a rejoicing to the whole earth. The



time for this is now come, and the voices, and thunders, and lightnings announce the judgments by which it is to be accomplished. An earthquake of unexampled violence, or an unprecedented crash of all earthly power, ensues. "The great city is divided into three parts" In the Revelation "the holy city" means Jerusalem; "the great city," Rome. It is elsewhere called "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." (Rev. 17: 18.) The city is here used for the whole Roman dominion, which is split into three parts. Besides this, the cities of the nations fall, there is a general overturning, the crashing up of the gold, and the silver, and the brass, and the iron, and the clay, beneath the weight of the stone which falls upon them and grinds them to powder. Great Babylon comes in remembrance, that corrupt religious system which survives the removal of the true Church. It, too, must now drink the cup of judgment whose contents are beheld in the next chapters. All places of security and strength, all islands and mountains, disappear, and a terrible scourge, likened to a storm of gigantic hailstones, sweeps away all man's schemes and systems from the earth. But all this hurricane of judgment cannot bow the stubborn rebellion and hatred of man's heart towards God, which again rise in fresh blasphemy against His name and ways.

#### THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON.

Revelation 17: 1 to 19: 4.

The last plague showed a shaking of all political and religious systems, in which the fall of Babylon held a foremost place. Babylon means confusion; for at Babel man made his first organized attempt to act in independence of God, and therefore God confounded it. It afterwards became the head of the Gentile powers which desolated Jerusalem, and consequently is often spoken of as representing the whole. The prophets also frequently denounce it in strong language on account of its shameless idolatry. The ideas therefore suggested by Babylon, whether civil or religious, are all in antagonism to God's city. It began in independence of God; it continued as the oppressor of God's people; it fell while using the vessels of God's temple to do honour to its own idols.

The city of Babylon has long been a ruinous heap, where the "wild beasts of the desert" couch, and the "houses are full of doleful creatures." But the system which Babylon represents still survives. Politically, it is independence of God, as seen in the beast; religiously,

it is idolatry, as seen in the woman. Both agree in hatred and persecution of God's people. The civil and religious aspects are often, as in Babylon itself, twined together, so that the threads cannot always be unravelled, but all the evil elements are united in the mystical Babylon of the Revelation. In every point of view it is ripe for judgment.

The Church may be looked at in its relationship either with Christ or with the world. In the former view no figure can be more exquisitely appropriate than that of the bride or wife. In the latter view no figure can be more expressive than that of some striking object in which skill and beauty are displayed such as a magnificent temple or city. Thus the Church is presented by John in this book under the two symbols of the Lamb's wife, and the "great city, the holy Jerusalem." On the other hand the counterfeit church, the apostate body which has professed to be the bride of Christ is presented under two corresponding figures – as the harlot or false wife in contrast with the true, and as the unholy city in contrast with the holy, the city of earth in contrast with the city "descending out of heaven," man's city in contrast with God's city, the city of the beast's throne in contrast with the city of the Lamb's throne. These two aspects are successively placed before us in the two chapters we are now considering.

#### BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS

(Revelation 17.)

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." (vv. 1, 2.) The seven angels had the last plagues, one of which was in part directed against Babylon. It is by one of these angels therefore that John is taken to witness her judgment. He styles her "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters." Now the first part of this figure is constantly used in Scripture as to those who forsake God for idolatry. In this sense it is repeatedly applied to Jerusalem and the Jews. As to the rest of the figure, we afterwards read that "the waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." (v. 15.)

"The great whore that sitteth upon many waters" means therefore some system of idolatry which has spread over vast regions and many nations. It is not, like the idolatry of the antichrist, a national apostacy, but has a far wider area. Again, she commits fornication with the kings of the earth. Instead of retaining her purity she lends herself to the corrupt passions of the world's sovereigns, and ensnares the people with her intoxicating charms, making them "drunk with the wine of her fornication."

"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.) Little of a wilderness as the world might seem to the enchantress herself or her ensnared votaries, to one who was in the Spirit her dwelling place was a wilderness indeed. "The vine of the earth" might flourish there, but fruit for God could not grow in such soil. To the anointed eye there is a moral and spiritual desert encircling far and wide this "mother of harlots." In this waste land she sits "upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." This admits of no mistake. The scarlet or imperial colour is the only feature added to the description from which we have already identified the beast with the head of the Roman Empire. This false system of religion, so widely spread over the earth, ministering by her corruptions to the kings, and seducing by her intoxicating charms the peoples of the world, rests upon that Roman Empire whose revival calls forth universal astonishment.

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." (v. 4.) Not only does she lean on the imperial power for support, but she clothes herself in imperial garments (purple and scarlet) adorning herself with all sorts of worldly splendour, and holding even her defilements and abominations in a golden cup.

"And upon her forehead was a name written, mystery, babylon the great, the mother of [the] harlots and abominations of the earth." (v. 5.) She has not, like the beast, the names of "blasphemy," but she has the name of "mystery." Now a mystery in Scripture means a secret not before revealed. There is therefore here a secret; but it is not the "mystery of iniquity" spoken of by Paul. No doubt there is a considerable likeness; but the man spoken of by Paul is clearly a person, while the woman named here is clearly a system. That is destroyed by

Christ's coming in judgment; this is destroyed by the ten kings and the beast before Christ's coming in judgment. The "man of sin" named by Paul answers closely to the false Christ of the Revelation, but differs essentially from the woman on the scarlet beast.

The mystery here, then, is not "the mystery of iniquity," but the strange secret that the Church should become thus hopelessly corrupt, a fact which in the next verse fills John with astonishment. "Babylon the great" shows her to be the moral representative of the corruption, idolatry, and enmity of God's people which formerly characterized the Chaldean monarchy. She is also called "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth;" for not merely is she an idolatrous system herself, but she has given birth to other idolatrous systems scattered over the world.

And with Babylon's idolatry she inherits also her oppression of God's people, though here it is not Jews, but Christians, that she persecutes. "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.) In persecuting the saints it resembles the false Christ, but this fills John with astonishment. Now the apostacy of the Jews under the antichrist had been foretold by Daniel and other prophets, so that John could feel no surprise at this. But here is a new thing, another apostacy, which overwhelms him with amazement. What could so astound him as such a corruption of Christianity itself? And what, apart from the work of the antichrist, is there to be found at all resembling this description save that so-called church, which, while bearing the name of Christ, has drawn her strength and her resources from Rome, has decked herself out in imperial raiment, has pandered by her corruptions to the kings of the world, has dazed the nations with her meretricious splendour, has darkened heaven with the smoke of her persecuting fires, and has set up idolatry side by side with the worship of God?

"And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present [for this is the true reading]. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth, And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and

one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." (vv. 7-11.)

In this passage the seven heads receive a double explanation. First they are said to be seven kings or forms of government. At this we have already looked. Secondly, they are interpreted as meaning seven mountains. Now the seven-hilled city is everywhere recognized as Rome. This identifies the beast with the Roman Empire. But they are also the "seven mountains on which the woman sitteth." It is not therefore a mere general connection between the empire and this religious apostacy that is here indicated, but a local connection between the religion and the city. The woman, or the system which the woman represents, has her seat in Rome. As "the mother of harlots," she may have children walking in her own evil ways, not directly connected with Rome. The principles of idolatry, and of worldly traffic unbecoming the bride of Christ, have eaten into a large portion of Christendom that is not professedly Romanist. But the harlot herself is the religious corruption that has its seat in the seven-hilled city.

Is it, then, Romanism in the past and present or Romanism in the future, that is here portrayed? The scene itself is, of course, future, and shows her in connection with the revived Roman Empire represented by the beast. But much of the description given is true of the past and present, belonging to the system itself. She is judged for her general character and career, her worldliness, her idolatry, her intoxication of the senses, and her persecution of God's people. She has had time given her to repent, and has not repented. Her last state is worse than her first; for the arm of flesh on which she now seeks to stay herself is the blasphemous tool of Satan, who at that time rules the revived Roman Empire. And now the time is come that she is to be cast "into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." (Rev. 2: 22.) There is grace for individuals connected with her if they repent, but none for the system itself, which has refused repentance.

The vision now quits the woman for a time, to give further information about the beast and the ten horns. "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. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 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." (vv. 12-14.) Daniel shows that the Roman Empire is divided into ten kingdoms – "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise." (Dan. 7: 24.) After this another little horn, the same as the beast in the Revelation, comes up, subduing three kingdoms, and exercising the whole power of the empire, which is judged on account of his blasphemy; "because of the voice of the great words which the *horn* spake: I beheld even till the *beast* [the Roman Empire] was slain." (Dan. 7: 11.)

This throws light on the Revelation. Some great power springs up out of the ten kingdoms into which the Roman Empire is divided, conquering three, and gaining ascendancy over the rest. This is the beast of the Revelation. A confederation is formed of states temporarily leagued under this powerful prince. There was something like this when several states acknowledged the lead and aided in the wars of the first Napoleon. In these days of rapid change there is nothing improbable in such a combination. These ten sovereigns "receive power as kings one hour with the beast." They may not be new sovereigns; the authority they receive may only refer to the present league. Thus it is said that power was given to the beast "to continue forty and two months;" but he reigned before this; for he made a covenant for seven years, of which the "forty and two months" was only the latter half. We need not therefore understand that these kings became kings at this time; but they have power given at this time for a special object, a very brief term, only "for one hour," but long enough to accomplish their dreadful purpose of making war with the Lamb. His victory, and the character of his followers, here just named, is more fully recorded afterwards. But before starting to their doom the beast and the ten kings have another object to accomplish.

The woman has been seated on the scarlet-coloured beast. She had been willing to commit fornication with the kings of the earth, to prostitute the religious power she wielded to pursue worldly ends, and advance the schemes of worldly sovereigns. She was willing to do this for the beast, even when acting under Satan's inspiration. But a new religion has now sprung up, the worship of a man, and all trace of Christianity must be obliterated. These sovereigns, therefore, now turn their hatred against the woman, who, though frightfully perverting, has still been called by the name of Christ. Vast as her influence has been, and perhaps still is, over the peoples, they resolve on her utter destruction. "And he saith unto me,

The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest *and* the beast [not "upon" the beast], these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." (vv. 15-18.)

This is all clear enough, and most instructive. God can use any instruments He will to carry out His purposes. Satan's malice only drives the remnant of God's people into the wilderness, where He meets them and speaks comfortably unto them, while it gathers the armies of the world to the place where He designs to execute judgment upon them. The Assyrian of old, and the beast and ten kings in this chapter, though hating and blaspheming God, are just his tools, with no knowledge or will of their own, to accomplish His unfailing designs. He has purposed to destroy the harlot, and these wicked kings, though leagued together to "make war with the Lamb," are the blind instruments He uses. Vanity of vanities! They rebel against His authority, deny His truth, blaspheme His name, combine against His purposes, and yet He hath put in their hearts to fulfil *His* will."

The federal character which this revived Roman Empire will take is clearly shown in this verse. The ten kings "agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast" for a specific object and season. It is not only the beast compelling them to follow his command, but it is a voluntary act on their part: "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed." This fierce outbreak of the infidel against the corrupt ecclesiastical power is what we see foreshadowed in the familiar events of the great French Revolution, where the so-called church was the special mark for popular hatred and bloody persecution. This was but a presage of the more terrible retribution which will presently be exacted, when the ten horns and the beast "shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire."

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Popular language has undesignedly confirmed this blending of the city and the system. We speak of persons going over to the Greek Church, or the English Church, not of their

going over to Greece or England, but to say that anybody has gone over to Rome means that he has joined the Roman Catholic Church. The language of the world thus undesignedly coincides with the language of Scripture in identifying "the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" with the religious system of which it is the seat.

This chapter really presents no more difficulty than always attaches to symbolic writing. But the distinction between Babylon and the Beast is so important, and so often overlooked, that we may add a few words on the subject. Three earthly powers, closely related, but quite different are seen in the Revelation.

First, there is the Roman power, under its last chief, the beast with seven heads and ten horns. He is a great prince, presiding over a confederacy of ten kings, and rules, either as sovereign, or by his ascendancy in the counsels of the league, over the territory, or at least the Western territory, of the ancient Roman Empire. His power, during the last three and a half years of his reign, is directly received from Satan, and is used to carry out Satan's persecution of the godly remnant of the Jews.

Second, the false Christ, or antichrist, is a pretender to divine character and worship – outwardly like a lamb, but with the voice of a dragon. He has miraculous powers, enters into a league with the head of the Roman Empire, which is described as "a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell;" and finally, when the Roman prince, under Satanic inspiration, puts down all Jewish rites, and exalts himself as an object of worship, the false Christ aids his schemes, sets up his image, which he miraculously endows with breath, and persecutes with relentless cruelty all who refuse to bow down to this new idol. This is the religious apostacy of the Jews.

Third, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, has not her seat at Jerusalem, but at Rome; is not a Jewish, but a Christian apostacy. True, all religious apostacies have some resemblance, and as both are connected with the Roman Empire, it is not strange that they are often confounded, especially where the Scripture truth concerning the restoration of Israel is not understood, and all prophecy has to be violently crushed into the straitened confines of the history of the Church. But while having many features alike, there are clear marks of distinction. In Revelation 12 and 13 the Spirit is occupied with Israel, and the Roman power is looked at



only in this relationship. Here, therefore, its connection with the antichrist is brought out. But in Revelation 17 it is looked at in its relationship with the harlot. Here, therefore, the league of the ten kings, and the attitude assumed towards the great religious system of the Roman Empire, are the prominent questions. The difference between the two religious apostacies, the Jewish and the Christian, is thus clear; and what makes it still more manifest is the different judgments which they undergo. The harlot is destroyed *by* the beast and his confederates; the antichrist perishes *with* the beast and his confederates. If then, Babylon be the Church of Rome, the antichrist cannot be the Church of Rome also. The confusion of the two involves even simple prophecies in perplexity; their distinction makes even prophecies which have caused perplexity perfectly simple.

#### THAT GREAT CITY BABYLON.

(Rev. 18: 1 to 19: 4.)

We have now seen God's judgment of Babylon as the harlot, the one who falsely took the place of the Lamb's wife. This chapter shows us its judgment as a city, or religious system in the world. Here we learn man's thoughts about it, and see how different the feelings created by its desolation in earth and in heaven.

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." (Rev. 18: 1-3.) There is a close correspondence here with the language of Isaiah. No doubt the prophet is foretelling the literal destruction of the Chaldean metropolis, whereas here it is figuratively applied, not to the city, but to the Church of Rome. Like the great city of old, the grandeur and glory of this mighty religious system have been overthrown. She, who drugged the nations with her intoxicating draughts, who flaunted as the paramour of earthly sovereigns, whose luxury and splendour enriched the merchants of the world, is now left empty and desolate, like a ruined city in whose tenantless abode all unclean creatures make their dwelling place. She who, in her religious arrogance, had

claimed to be the habitation of the Holy Ghost, is now become "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit."

In this corrupt system, indeed, there are, and always have been, true children of God; for His grace can overleap all barriers. But God calls them to come out of it, warning them of its true character and coming judgment. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." (vv. 4, 5.) How contrary God's thoughts are to the sadly low thoughts of many of His people. To man it often seems a light thing whether he is connected with evil or not, provided he is personally safe. But how dishonouring are such thoughts to God! Here the people called to quit this evil system are God's people, as Lot was in Sodom, and God will never let His own perish. But how different the fate of Lot – saved "so as by fire" and with loss of everything – from that of Abraham, beholding the judgment from the heights of Hebron. Such is the difference between those who walk in separation from evil, and those who go on contentedly with it because they are assured of their own salvation. Like Sodom, the sins of this corrupt system have ascended up to heaven, and God's people are called, like Lot to save themselves by coming out of it.

The kings leagued against the Lamb are the instruments by which the false church is stripped of its glory and riches, and rendered desolate; but in this they are ignorantly carrying out God's purposes, as Nebuchadnezzar of old. So the voice from heaven bids them "reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" (vv. 6-8.) Rome, though committing fornication with the kings of the earth, has often shown her insolence and spiritual pride in trampling upon them. Perhaps this is what is alluded to when they are told, "Reward her even as she rewarded you," though more probably it is only a general exhortation to repay her according to her wickedness and cruelty. She had exalted herself and lived for the world instead of Christ and now sorrow and torment are her lot. She had filled her cup with the filthiness of her

fornications, and now the cup of judgment is to be filled to her double. She had prided herself in her power and glory, instead of waiting for her absent Lord, and now desolation comes upon her – she is destroyed as by fire, for the God whom she has despised is a mighty God, and will not be mocked.

Such are the voices from heaven; but man's thoughts are very different. Two classes of persons mourn over her – "the kings of the earth," who have been aided by her power, and "the merchants of the earth," who have grown rich out of her luxuries. "And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city for in one hour is thy judgment come." (vv. 9, 10.) Though appalled by the violence of her overthrow, and fearing to stand up for her defence, yet the crowned heads generally lament the fall of a power which has usually sought its own aggrandisement by ministering to the aggrandisement of sovereigns. A corrupt alliance with the secular power, which she upheld as a tool of her own ambition, has always been a favourite policy of the Roman See. The sovereigns of the world are therefore, for the most part, distressed at her overthrow.

But Rome has not only woven the meshes of her net round the great and powerful. Her worldliness, her splendour, and her pomp have made her dear to those who minister to luxury and ostentation. The wife of an absent Christ should have been clothed in widow's weeds, but she had sat as a queen, and no widow, arraying herself in purple and scarlet, and bedizened with gold, and precious stones, and pearls. No wonder "the merchants of the earth" bewail her fall. "And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyme wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men [or "bodies and souls of men"]. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of

her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought." (vv. 11-17.)

The Church was called to be separate from the world, and to wait for the Lord. "Our conversation," says Paul, "is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." But it soon left this waiting attitude, and said in its heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming." Presently, as we see in the sketch of ecclesiastical history furnished by the seven churches, it settled down in the world, "where Satan's seat is." The next step is soon made. Having ceased to be a widow, she began to be a queen. Abandoning her proper heavenly hope, she appropriated the earthly hopes of the Jews, which were more pleasing to her worldly tastes. Heedless of the apostle's warning, she forgot that, if unfaithful, she would be cut off. Her widowed character was dropped, and the splendour and glory promised to Israel, but utterly unsuited to the Church, were claimed and appropriated for herself. She became, not only a great power in the world, but a power before which all others must bow. True, her pretensions aroused resistance, and the monarchs who crouched before her at one moment would defy her at another. But such were her claims, claims she has never abated, while her splendour and luxury exceeded all limits. For this she is now visited. Suddenly, as by an unexpected squall, when apparently sailing along in perfect safety, she is plunged a wreck beneath the waves. The very power she has leaned upon turns with fury against her, and becomes her destroyer. "In one hour so great riches is come to nought."

Man loves what glorifies and enriches himself. The fail of this system is regarded by him without care for its moral character or the dishonour it has done to God. Absorbed in his own interests, God is not in all his thoughts. "And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate." (vv. 17-19.) It is terrible to see what man may become without God. But, perhaps, the most hideous spectacle of all is man's self-exaltation in the things of God, the Church, wrested, as it were, from Christ, and made the ladder to human selfishness and aggrandisement. There is awful

significance in the words "souls of men," closing the list of her merchandise. The power of the priesthood has been horribly abused in other religions; but who could have dreamed of a deliberate bartering of souls for money carried on by that which professes to be the spotless bride of Christ? Who can wonder that God's judgments, long suspended, should at length fall, with sudden and crushing destruction, on such a system?

No wonder there is joy in heaven. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets [or ye saints, and apostles, and prophets], for God hath avenged you on her." (v. 20.) It may seem strange that a system which sprung up long after the apostles' days should be thus spoken of. No doubt, like Jerusalem of old, it "built the tombs of the prophets and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous," and said, "If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." But to this very same Jerusalem it was said, "Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel." (Matt. 23: 29-35.) In like manner it is said of Babylon, "In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (Rev. 18: 24.)

The close moral connection between the head of the Gentile monarchies and the mystical Babylon of the Revelation is further shown by the resemblance of the figures describing their overthrow. Jeremiah, binding up his prophecy against Babylon with a stone, cast it into the Euphrates, saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her." (Jer. 51: 63, 64.) So, in the chapter before us, we read, "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." (v. 21.)

Instead of a city full of worldly delight and activity, she is to be like a city utterly forsaken, a picture of desolation and misery. "And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy

merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (vv. 22-24.) Three charges are thus brought against this system. The Church was set here to live for heaven, but Rome has sought worldly objects worldly wealth, worldly power, worldly glory – her merchants have been "the great men of the earth." The Church was set here to be "the pillar and ground of the truth," but Rome has corrupted the truth "By thy sorceries were all nations deceived." The Church was set here to endure persecution, if needs be, on Christ's behalf; but Rome has been the persecutor of God's people – "In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

Angels and voices from heaven have declared the joy there felt at the destruction of Babylon. We now behold the joy of the heavenly host in the presence of God. "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God [or "the salvation, the glory, and the power of our God"]: for true and righteous are His judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." (Rev. 19: 1-3.) Nothing can more solemnly mark God's abhorrence of counterfeits in the things of Christ than this reiterated joy over the judgment of the corrupt system which usurps the name, while belying the character, of the Lamb's wife. While much people on earth, mindful only of their own fancied interests, are bewailing her fall, "much people in heaven," mindful of Christ's glory, are giving praise to God for avenging the blood of His servants and judging the corrupter of the world.

"Again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." To man, and religious man, there is something imposing in a system which can boast of antiquity so venerable, architecture so splendid, music so enchanting, organization so perfect, power so tremendous, pretensions so overwhelming. But all this is worthless in God's sight. It is the wine with which she makes the nations drunk; but it is the product of "the vine of the earth," intoxicating to the senses, and having nothing of the Spirit of God. Such earthly delights are unsuited to the bride of an absent Christ, and are consistent with the bitterest hatred and cruelest persecution of the servants of God. All therefore will be consumed in judgment – "Her smoke rose up for ever and

ever."

"And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia." (v. 4.) All heaven has but one song, but one note, as to the downfall of this corrupt system. True, judgment is God's strange work, but it is needful to clear the ground for blessing, and we shall see shortly for what a mighty and blessed event this judgment prepares the way. The four and twenty elders who join in this thanksgiving are here named for the last time. They are, as we have seen, a company representing the redeemed, who have been raised or caught up when Christ came for His saints, and are, now for ever with the Lord. They add their Alleluia to the chorus of joy at the judgment of the harlot, and then as a company vanish out of sight. The reason for this will appear as we look at the new scenes now about to open before us.

*Part Third.*

THE GLORIOUS COMING AND KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

(Revelation 19: 5 to 22: 21)

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THE LAMB'S WIFE.

Revelation 19: 5-10.

As the marriage of the Lamb and the presentation of the bride are before Christ's glorious appearing to judge and

govern the world, it might be thought better to class them with those preliminary events dealt with in our last part. They are however so closely associated with His coming to receive His inheritance that the moral connection seems more strictly preserved by regarding them as a foreground to that picture of His advent and reign which fills the rest of the book. Christ takes His inheritance as "Head of the body, the Church;" nor is He, so to speak, perfected for this inheritance until the Church is thus associated with him; for it is "the fulness [or completion] of Him that filleth all in all." In one sense indeed the Church is thus associated with Him now; but the time for its full and perfect recognition as the Lamb's wife is only just before His glorious appearing.

The judgment of Babylon is among the latest acts before Christ's reign; for the seven last plagues "fill up the wrath of God," and this judgment is one of the last events in this closing scene. The league of the beast and the ten kings is only for "one hour," a term clearly signifying a very short period; and they are already gathering their forces for the fatal battle-field of Armageddon, when this outburst of fury lays Babylon in the dust. There is a design in this. The events in heaven wait, so to speak, on the events in the earth. While the harlot reigns the wife does not take the place she has in God's counsels. As soon as the harlot is judged the wife is seen arrayed in her wedding garments, and the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated in heaven.

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." (Rev.19: 5.) This verse connects the portion we have before been looking at with that which now comes before us. A voice issues from the throne, the throne of judgment on which God is sitting, claiming worship from all His servants, and all that fear Him. His judgments now visiting the earth include both the solemn destruction of His enemies, and the vindication of His own holiness. The former we have seen in the judgment of Babylon; the latter we now see in time reign of Christ, and the glory of the Church, the first-fruits of His redemption work.

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent [or Almighty] reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." (vv. 6, 7.) Here, as we have seen before, the reign of Christ



and of God are spoken of as identical. This is not because Christ is God (for it is as man that He takes the kingdom), but it is because Christ as man perfectly carries out God's will; so that His government is, what all government should be, the government of God administered in obedience to His will by man. How soon after its institution government lost this character is shown in the Old Testament. How completely it reverses it in its last stage, when the ruling power of the world becomes the executor, not of God's will, but of Satan's, is shown in former chapters of this book. Now God is about to give the throne to the one man who will perfectly carry out His will, so that He Himself shall really reign in the earth.

Here again God is spoken of as Lord God Almighty — Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai. It was as Almighty God that He entered into covenant with Abraham; it was as Jehovah that He made Himself known to Israel. The promises of earthly dominion and government given to the seed of Abraham and the nation of Israel all cluster round these names. It was only by faith indeed that Abraham knew God as the Almighty; but now He is about to show Himself, both to friend and foe, as at once almighty in His judgments, and almighty in His salvation.

But glory is given to God, not merely because He reigneth, but because "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." Who then is this wife of the Lamb? Speaking to the Corinthians, Paul says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11: 2.) And so in another epistle he writes, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. . . . For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of His flesh, and of his bones. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (Eph. 5: 25-32.)

These passages show that the Lamb's wife spoken of in the Revelation is the Church. The scene of the marriage is in heaven, and it is important to bear this in mind, for there is an earthly as well as a heavenly bride, just as there is an earthly as well as a heavenly Jerusalem. The difference, however, is most marked. Jeremiah writes, "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals." (Jer. 2: 2.) The espoused wife

proves herself unfaithful, and is cast off; but God declares, that after many days of visitation He "will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. . . . And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth." (Hosea 2: 14, 15.) And when Christ comes as King, girding His sword upon His thigh, making His arrows sharp in the heart of His enemies, and establishing His throne "for ever and ever;" when He appears anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, all His garments smelling "of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces;" then it is said to Jerusalem, "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him." (Ps. 45: 1-11.) How different the earthly and the heavenly brides! The earthly bride, having proved unfaithful, is cast off, but will at length be allured into the wilderness, and thence restored and made glorious in the earth. The heavenly bride, the true Church of God, has never been cast off but is taken to be with Christ, and receives glory in heaven. It is clearly to the heavenly bride, and not to the earthly, that the scene in the Revelation refers.

We can now understand why, after the rejoicings which took place on the fall of Babylon, the twenty four elders are never again seen. As representing the redeemed, they consisted partly of "the Church of the firstborn," that is, believers baptized into one body with Christ, His bride, and partly of the "just men made perfect," or the saints of the older dispensations. Until the marriage of the Lamb these formed one company. But now that His wife hath made herself ready, they must separate. Some of those whom the elders represent belong to the Church, the Lamb's wife, and some do not. They are now, therefore, divided into different companies, each to receive a distinct blessing.

The blessing of the Old Testament saints is afterwards named, but John's vision was naturally riveted on the glories of the wife. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints." (v. 8.) The use of the plural here shows that this raiment is not the righteousness imputed to all believers, but the righteous deeds of the saints, wrought in them by the Spirit of God, and now displayed as the covering and glory of the Church. The thing is stated in an abstract way to suit the figure, but is individually applied in the epistles. Before this time believers will have been manifested at the tribunal of Christ, their works scrutinized, and a reward, proportioned to their faithfulness, bestowed. Each saint will appear with Christ arrayed in the

righteousness He has wrought; the trials of faith, often so hard to bear down here, will "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1: 7.)

What a contrast between the scarlet and purple, the gold, and precious stones and pearls, with which the harlot dazzled the eyes of the world, and the white robe, the mark of God's approval, in which it is granted to the wife to appear at the revelation of Jesus Christ! The splendour of the harlot, though "highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." On the other hand, the very deeds that drew down the scorn, the hatred, and the persecution of the world, are owned by God, and given for the adornment of the Lamb's wife throughout eternity.

"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, then, are two classes. The Church is the Lamb's wife, but besides her there are persons "called unto the marriage supper" John the Baptist said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." (John 3: 29.) These words, though spoken of the earthly bride, are equally true of the heavenly. They show that there are saints who rejoice in the bridegroom's voice, yet are not of the bride. The Old Testament saints were, in this respect, like John the Baptist. They are not of the bride. Heirs of glory and immortality, blessed according to the riches of God's grace, still their relationship with Christ and their portion in heaven are not the same as those of the Church. Friends of the bridegroom they will, of course, be, and will rejoice greatly because of His voice. Their hearts will go forth in praise and gladness at the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is their blessed portion in connection with the bridegroom whom they love. But to the Church will belong the supreme, unapproachable joy of being acknowledged as His wife, the special object of His affections, presented to himself without "spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," loved and cherished even as His own flesh.

And here comes in a word to the conscience – "These are the true sayings of God." How such an assurance seems needed as a spur to our poor, halting faith! How apt we are, in contemplating so magnificent a destiny, to yield the assent of our intellects, while withholding the confidence of our hearts. What rapture would fill one

souls, if these things were received, not only as doctrines, but as facts. How the brightest light of this world would pale before the splendour of this noonday sun. What down here could attract the heart that was really gazing by faith on this prospect of unclouded glory opened up to us in the heavens? What riches, what splendour, what pleasures, could allure the soul to earth, which had appropriated, through trust in God's word, the glories that belong to the Lamb's wife?

So overwhelming is this spectacle, that John, oppressed by the exceeding eight of glory, would fain render divine homage to the angel that showed him it. "And I fell at his feet to worship him; and he said unto me, See thou do it not; I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (v. 10.) God alone is the object of worship. The angel, however glorious, is only a ministering spirit, and here ranks himself with John as a "fellow servant." He is also the fellow-servant of all "that have the testimony of Jesus." This, in the book of Revelation, is the spirit of prophecy. In other portions of the Word the Holy Ghost speaks, but here the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus Himself for it is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass."

#### CHRIST'S COMING WITH HIS SAINTS.

Revelation 19: 11 to 20: 3.

The marriage of the Lamb has hardly taken place when the grand spectacle for which all the previous history has formed the avenue suddenly bursts upon our sight. Terrible as the successive waves of judgment have been, they have led to no repentance. Man, as the billows have broken over him, has only hardened himself in iniquity, and blasphemed the God from whom these warnings came. Their terror has not roused him from his self-satisfaction and self-seeking. Life still runs its course as when Noah entered into the ark, or when God rained fire and brimstone from heaven upon the cities of the plain. Men eat and drink, marry and give in marriage, buy and sell, plant and build, till the very day that the Son of man appears "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God."

And if such is the ordinary course of life even in this dreadful epoch, what will be the condition of the world politically and morally? A great war will be raging, with

the holy Land for its battle-field and its prize. The prince of the Roman Empire, now strangely revived, will have led his confederate forces into the country to perish on the field of Armageddon. The unbelieving portion of the Jews, who, under the false Christ, have re-established idolatry and entered into a league with the Roman confederacy, will be sustaining a siege of unexampled horrors from an enemy that has crossed the Euphrates and now threatens the total destruction of the nation. Behind this scene Satan will be at work, rising the antichrist as his tool to deceive the Jews, the head of the Roman Empire as his tool to corrupt the Gentiles, and both as his tools to persecute the faithful remnant who, in the very vortex of this raging wickedness and misery, are still crying, and looking to God for deliverance. And over all is God, still hidden, but unswervingly carrying out His own purposes, converting the machinations of His enemies and the wiles of Satan into pit-falls for their destruction, and instruments for the accomplishment of His own will.

It is only with one branch, either of the judgments or of the blessings, that the Revelation deals. Other Scriptures tell the fate of Gog, of the Assyrian, of the Edomites, and other neighbouring nations. This book describes only the judgment of the Roman prince and of the false Christ, who have cast so lurid a light over its earlier chapters. Other Scriptures tell the glories of the earthly Jerusalem and of restored Israel. This book describes only the glories of those who reign with Christ, and of the New Jerusalem, "descending out of heaven from God." We do indeed catch glimpses of the countless throng of Gentiles emerging from "the great tribulation," of the sealed remnant of Israel, and the victorious remnant of Judah, through momentary rifts in the dark clouds of judgment which have been rolling round us. These glimpses show how fully the word of God here is in with the word of God elsewhere. But the general object of the book is to supplement the truths already revealed, by fresh unfoldings of God's purposes. The Church held no place in the Old Testament teaching. It is, therefore, concerning the Church, and things connected with the Church, that the light of revelation is here specially given.

Now this book takes up the Church and its immediate connections in three aspects: the true Church, whose glory it shows in heaven as the Lamb's wife; the false church whose destruction it narrates in the fall of Babylon; and Latin Christendom, which, as the revived Roman Empire, at last destroys Babylon, and plunges into blasphemous infidelity and idolatry. It is of these

things, scarcely touched in the Old Testament, that the book of Revelation treats. The fate of Babylon we have already seen: the coming of Christ, in its connection with the true Church and the Roman Empire, is now brought before us.

#### CHRIST'S GLORY AND ARMY.

(Verses 11-16.)

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God." (vv. 11-13.) The great event for which the saints have been sighing, creation groaning, and even a shuddering world at one time looking, now at length takes place. Mounted on a white horse, the symbol of victorious power, Christ issues from the opened heavens. While, on earth, "they are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one," He comes as the Faithful and the True. The armies of the world were summoned by "unclean spirits," but "in righteousness He doth judge and make war." Coming in awful retribution, "His eyes are as a flame of fire;" while as King, He wears on His head "many crowns." But beyond all that man's eye can see, He has a glory and character of His own, incommunicable and incomprehensible, "a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself." Man as He is, He is also the Son of God, and thus a fulness resides in him which no mere creature intelligence can fathom.

Awful to relate, He is "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," not the blood of atonement, but the blood of judgment. He is red in His apparel because, as He says in Isaiah, "I have trodden the wine-press 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." (Isa. 64: 3, 4.) It is a terrible picture, but not more terrible than true. He is, as in the days of His humiliation, "the Word of God," the perfect exponent of God's mind. Then He came "full of grace and truth," laid His glory by, stooped to death, and was made a propitiation for sins. He has since sent forth His ambassadors, praying men, in His stead, to be reconciled to God. But men have scorned and slighted

his invitations, despised and persecuted His messengers. And now the same "Word of God" comes again, to declare and execute God's will, no longer in grace, but in judgment.

Even now, indeed, His love is as great as ever, and the blessings He bestows as worthy of Himself. But they must be brought in by judgment. Men, having refused to submit to His grace, must be made to submit to His power. Then shall the world be filled with praise. Then shall the song burst forth, "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: sing forth the honour of His name: make His praise glorious. Say unto God, how terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth doth worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name." (Ps. 66: 1-4.)

But Christ does not come alone. "And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations and He shall rule them with a rod of iron and He treadeth the wine of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (vv. 14, 15.) These armies in heaven are "clothed in fine linen, white and clean, which, as we have lately seen, symbolizes "the righteousnesses of saints," and, like Christ, are seated on white horses, types of victorious power. This identifies them with the Church, which is clothed in white raiment, and is to reign with Christ. That it must be the Church is clear, too, because Christ is now coming to "smite the nations," and to "rule them with a rod of iron." But He has promised the Christian overcomer to give him "power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father." So likewise, in describing the war of the ten kings against the Lamb, it is said, those who "are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful." (Rev. 22: 14.) Now this can only refer to saints, for though angels are "chosen and faithful," they are not, and could not be, spoken of as "called." Calling, on the contrary, is the special characteristic of the saints, who are constantly spoken of as "called saints," or saints by calling. It is, therefore, the Church, with the addition, perhaps, of the Old Testament saints, that here accompanies Christ as the armies in heaven.

The Church is associated with its Head in everything, in suffering, in life, in judgment, in dominion, in glory. Like Christ, it is not of this world, and in the world it must have tribulation. But if believers suffer with

Christ, it is because they are quickened together with Him, and "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken their mortal bodies." They are, therefore, one with Him in life as well as in suffering. And being thus associated with Him, He makes them sharers of all He is and has. If He will judge the world and angels, the saints shall judge the world, and judge angels also. If He will rule the nations with a rod of iron, the saints will rule them with a rod of iron also. If He will appear in glory to the world, the saints "shall appear with Him in glory" also. If He reigns, the saints who suffer shall reign with him also. Here He comes forth with a sharp sword out of His mouth, to tread "the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God," and the saints, as the armies of heaven, come forth with Him also.

"And He hath on his vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords." (v. 16.) How vain are all man's efforts to resist God. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Jehovah and against His Anointed." The armies of the beast have been summoned to "make war with the Lamb." To such giddy heights of madness can human pride and presumption climb. But God's decree remains unchanged: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." In spite of all man's feeble efforts He hath "a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords;" for God hath "given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2: 9-11.)

#### JUDGMENT OF THE BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET.

(Verses 17-21.)

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." (vv. 17, 18.) God prepared a great supper before, a banquet of grace and love, and sent out his servants to call them that were hidden. For near two thousand years the table has been spread, and still men turn a deaf ear, and go, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. Nay, the remnant have taken His servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slain



them. But God will not be mocked for ever. The day of judgment has now dawned. It is not now, as with Israel, armies sent forth to destroy the murderers and burn up their city. It is Christ Himself coming to slay them with the sword of His mouth. And now another supper is spread, the supper of the great God, and the flesh of kings and captains, the despisers alike of grace and judgment, is the dreadful repast. An angel, standing in the seat of supreme authority, bids the guests, "all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven," to come and revel in the feast. One's heart sickens at the horrid sight, and one can only say, with Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And now comes the great catastrophe, the end of man's daring machinations when he madly raises his puny hand against God. "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. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." (vv. 19-21.) Man dares to defy God now; but how fearful the arrogance to which his pride will reach, when he goes forth "to make war against Him that sitteth on the horse!" Yet "these are the true sayings of God." This is what man will surely do. But how speedy and inevitable the end! As in creation, "He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast," so here, in an instant, the wicked is consumed with the spirit of His mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of His coming. There is no campaign here, no long, doubtful struggle, with victory inclining first to one side and then to the other; for as Isaiah says, when describing the destruction of another adversary by the Lord's advent "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." (Isa. 9: 5.) The armies of the beast are slain, and given to the fowls of heaven. But a more awful fate is reserved for the beast and his wicked coadjutor.

Two men have been taken to heaven without tasting death. Two men will be cast into hell without tasting death. A thousand years before the dead are judged, a thousand years before Satan is finally punished, the leaders of man's guilt and blasphemy will be "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Other companies will

follow both in the blessing and the doom. When the Lord comes for His saints, before the time we are now looking at, all believers living on the earth will be caught up to be with Him in heaven. When the Lord judges the nations, shortly after the time we are now looking at, all those whom He places on the left hand will be banished at once "into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." But as there is something specially blessed in the lot of the two men singly caught up into God's presence, so there is something specially ghastly in the fate of the two men singly cast into the lake of fire. There is an awful isolation in their doom which oppresses the imagination. And yet this is the destiny of men whom the popular voice has exalted into gods, men whose wisdom and power have been the theme of universal admiration, men who have only carried out the common desire of our fallen nature to forget God, and work according to their own will.

SATAN BOUND.

(Revelation 20: 1-8.)

There are, as we have said, other judgments on the nations before Christ's throne is established and his people fully delivered. Three epochs are fixed – the thousand two hundred and sixty-days already named, and two others beginning from the same period. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and *ninety* days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the *thousand three hundred and five and thirty days*." (Dan. 12: 11, 12.) There are, therefore, three stages in the deliverance, one thirty days, and the other seventy-five days, after the close of the three and a half years. But since the only judgment here named is that of the beast and his confederates, it would be beside our purpose to enter into the other events.

The Revelation, however, draws aside the curtain, and discloses a series of scenes not named in other scriptures. The war in heaven showed the part which Satan was playing as accuser of the brethren. Afterwards, however hidden behind his human masks, he is the real instigator of all the horrible wickedness and cruel persecution of the saints which his deluded agents carry on in the world. Till now God has left him at large; and such is the power which he has gained by his lies over the hearts of men, that he is called the prince and the god of this world. But now that the true Prince is come,

and God claims His rights as the Creator and Governor of mankind, Satan must be bound. If the true wife is to be acknowledged, the harlot must be judged; if the true Prince is to be acknowledged, the usurper must be put aside. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season." (Rev. 20: 1-3.)

Satan is not very frequently mentioned in the Old Testament; but enough is said there to show his real character. He is the persistent hater of God and good. He first appears as the deceiver of men, then as their accuser before God, and in both cases his falsehood rivals his malice. Hence our Lord says of him, that "when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8: 44.) As God is the author of truth, Satan is the author of falsehood; as God is the author of light, Satan is the author of darkness. But alas! his deceits have so blinded men's eyes, that even when the light shines they love darkness rather than light. He so deluded the Gentiles, that they worshipped devils instead of God; he so deluded the Jews, that they clamoured for the blood of their own Messiah, and crucified the One who alone could bring them blessing. Since then he has gone about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour. He is "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." He has infused his poisonous corruptions into Christianity, and will at last bring in that iniquity and blasphemy which draw down so dreadful a doom on the beast and the false prophet. While he is permitted to go to and fro in the earth there is no safety for man. At the beginning of Christ's reign therefore he is bound, and allowed to deceive the nations no more.

This is not, as some have thought the result of the spread of truth. So far from truth spreading, it is at this period all but extinguished, and the most hideous wickedness is corning in like a flood. Satan's power is never so great as just before his imprisonment. Instead of being overthrown by the triumphs of the gospel, he is suddenly arrested in the very climax of his disastrous sway over the hearts of men by the personal advent of the Lord himself. The blessings brought to the world by this advent come, not gradually, but in a moment. It is

suddenly that Satan is bound, suddenly that the beast and false prophet are destroyed, suddenly that God's faithful people are redeemed, suddenly that creation "is delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." Then will come a season of real blessing for the earth and for mankind. But all Scripture describes its advent, not as a gradual dawn slowly expunging the darkness from the sky, but as a vivid burst of light revealing and banishing the thick gloom that overspreads the nations, and then shining in calm splendour over a redeemed and emancipated world.

#### THE MILLENNIAL REIGN.

Revelation 20: 4-16.

The reign of Christ is often spoken of in Scripture. Its splendours and blessings, as affecting Israel, shine prominently out in the Old Testament, and stand clearly marked in the background of the New. They have shot occasional gleams of sunshine even through the thick gloom of judgment which envelopes this book. Here, however, in consistency with the general character of the Revelation, we see rather the retributive than the beneficent side of the Messiah's kingdom. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." The first act of the reign was the judgment of the living, of which we had one awful example in the beast and his armies. Its last act will be the judgment of the dead and the casting of Death and Hades into the lake of fire.

#### THE FELLOW-HEIRS.

(Verses 4-6.)

The earthly glories of the Messiah's kingdom are, as we have said, merely seen in transient glimpses throughout this book. But the heavenly glories, about which other Scriptures are silent, are more fully detailed. Believers are said to be "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." When Christ reigns, therefore, it will not be alone, but in company with His fellow-heirs. This is the feature of the reign now brought before us. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and [those] which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (vv. 4-6.)

Three classes are here associated with Christ in His reign. The first is not described "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." Who are these? None to whom this could refer have been named since the armies of heaven came forth with Christ. It can only be to these, therefore, that allusion is here made. Indeed, the reason why they are not more fully described is probably that none other could be meant. These armies of heaven, as we have already seen, consist, wholly or in part, of the church. But the Old Testament saints may, perhaps, also be included, The garment of white linen is the special bridal costume of the Lamb's wife, but as it signifies "the righteousnesses of saints," it might adorn also the saints of the older dispensations. It is not, indeed, said that these shall reign with Christ, but comparatively little is revealed as to their distinctive portion in the heavenly glories, and the silence of the Old Testament is not supplied by the teachings of the New. The Lamb's wife is the Church, and only the Church; but it is possible that the older saints are included in the armies of heaven which accompany Christ and in the first of the three classes which share His reign.

In this reign the Church, whether alone or not, obtains its long-promised portion. Believers, fully conformed to Christ's image, will share His dominion over "the world to come." Such are the riches of God's grace bestowed upon all who have rested in Jesus as a Saviour. After enumerating the most loathsome vices and crimes, the apostle says to the Corinthians, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6: 11.) And of such it is declared that they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," that they are made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." No wonder the apostle prays that we "may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." But besides this first class there are two others. On the opening of the fifth seal were seen "under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." (Rev. 6: 9.) This is the second class, here described as "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of' Jesus, and for the word of God." These had cried to God

to judge and avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. They had white robes given them, but "it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

These fellow-servants and brethren of the earlier martyrs form the third class of those who have "part in the first resurrection." It consists of those slain during the great tribulation for refusing to worship the beast and his image, saints whom we have already seen by anticipation in heaven, who having "gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

The proper hope of these two later classes of saints was not heavenly, but earthly. They were called after the Church, or heavenly dispensation, had passed away, and called to look for Christ's return to reign over the earth. Of this they witnessed; for this they died. But by their martyrdom they lost the very hope for which they had been martyred; and as the heavenly hope was not theirs, what was to be their portion? To the last class "a voice from heaven" had proclaimed, "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." We now see what this blessedness is. Instead of the earthly portion they have lost, they are made to share the heavenly portion of the Church, and perhaps the saints of the older dispensations, as joint heirs with Christ. Truly a blessed exchange! For God delights to give, not according to the measure even of His own calling, but beyond all measure except the abounding fulness of His own grace.

These three classes, then, live and reign with Christ. At this point the book lays aside for the moment its usual symbolic garb, and appears in a naked simplicity of language which leaves room for no misunderstanding. It says that Christ comes to judge the world; that after destroying His enemies and binding Satan, He reigns for a thousand years; and that in this dominion the three classes of heavenly saints live and reign with Him, while the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years are finished. This shows that the saints here named had, for the most part at least, been dead, and had now been raised. For if they had been only disembodied spirits, in what would they have differed from "the rest of the dead"? The difference is, not in the fact that their *spirits* lived, for this was common to both, but in the fact that their *bodies* had been raised.

Hence it goes on to say, "This is the first resurrection," showing that there is more than one resurrection, and that these persons who live and reign with Christ are raised in the first. It adds, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." No language could be clearer. It is evident that there are two resurrections — the first of believers before the thousand years' reign, and the second of unbelievers after the thousand years' reign. If this does not mean a resurrection of the body, where in Scripture is the resurrection of the body taught? The theological chemistry which could evaporate the teaching of this passage could equally evaporate the teaching of the others, or indeed of any passage on any subject. The Church having through its worldliness lost the present hope of the Lord's return, began to look for it only at the end of the world. Hence the doctrine of a universal resurrection and judgment at that period received general acceptance, and theology sought to manipulate Scripture into accordance with this doctrine. But no manipulation can destroy the plain meaning of a passage like this, which shows that there are two resurrections — one to life, the other to judgment and that the first precedes the second by a period of a thousand years.

Other scriptures show that the first resurrection takes place when Christ comes for His saints. "The Lord Himself shall 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." (1 Thess. 4: 16, 17.) And again, "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15: 51, 52.) These passages show that the first resurrection takes place when the Lord comes for His living saints, and that this was to be the present hope of even the generation of Christians then on earth. Hence our Lord says, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. (Luke 12: 35, 36.) And Paul commends the Thessalonian saints because they had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10.)

This is the great scene of the first resurrection, which takes place before the judgments and sorrows recorded in this book. It includes all of the first class, all the saints, who, as represented by the four and twenty elders, are seen around the throne of God in glorified bodies, while the judgments are visiting the world. But the other two classes who share this resurrection suffer martyrdom during these judgments. Their resurrection is therefore a sort of supplemental act to the great scene already described. It is symbolized, at least partly, in the raising of the two witnesses. It is not said that these two classes of saints form a part of the bride; for this is the blessed distinction of the Church alone; but like the rest of the saints who have part in this resurrection, they are "blessed and holy," are freed from the power of the "second death," are "priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

SATAN LOOSED A LITTLE SEASON.

(Verses 7-10.)

The blessings of the earth during the Messiah's reign, the fulfilment of the prophecies to Abraham and to David, the removal of the curse on creation, the new covenant with Israel and Judah; these and other subjects of deep interest are abundantly treated of in the prophets, and are alluded to in the New Testament. But they are all omitted here. The glories of the heavenly Jerusalem and the heavenly bride are recorded; those of the earthly Jerusalem and the earthly bride are passed over in silence. For in this book the earth is always a scene of judgment. And now a very solemn fact is mentioned. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (vv. 7-9.)

Such is man, and such is Satan. A thousand years confinement in the bottomless pit has not changed the character of the deceiver. A thousand years' blessedness under Christ's rule has not changed the nature which greedily listens to the deceiver's voice. Gog and Magog are here used in a wider sense than in Ezekiel, and their invasion differs in time and details, though agreeing in character and object, with that which he foretells. Ezekiel predicts an incursion by a great northern power



called Gog, which, from certain geographical indications, is easily identified with Russia. In the Revelation, however, Gog and Magog are used to designate the nations, not merely from the north, but from all parts, "the four quarters of the earth." Again, the invasion named by Ezekiel is at the beginning of Christ's reign; that in the Revelation at the end. The hosts in Ezekiel, too, fall on the mountains, and their bodies are buried; whereas the forces assembled in the Revelation are devoured by fire from heaven.

The judgment is instantaneous. Christ's reign is a reign of righteousness, during which evil is not tolerated as now, but promptly crushed. Fire from heaven here, as with Sodom and Gomorrah, overwhelms the gathered hordes, and thus in hideous and hopeless ruin ends the last vain attempt of man to act in independence of God.

The people of Israel are here owned as "the saints," and Jerusalem as "the beloved city." Taken in connection with Old Testament promises and prophecies this presents no difficulties. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." (Ps. 48: 2.) "They shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." (Isa. 60: 14, 15.) "Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people." (Isa. 65: 18, 19.) It is only when these clear statements are discredited, and an interpretation contrary to their plain meaning adopted, that difficulties begin to appear.

This rebellion against Christ is Satan's last triumph. and the last outbreak of man's enmity to God. We have seen how the nations are at once swept away by the fiery tempest which bursts upon them. We now see the final doom of their malignant deceiver. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and [they] shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (v. 10.) He had previously been shut up in "the bottomless pit;" now he is cast into the "lake of fire" that awful abode into which the beast and the false prophet were hurled a thousand years before; that "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," to which the "cursed" ones, placed on the left hand of the Son of man in His judgment of the living nations, are hopelessly consigned. There "they" (that is, the beast and the false prophet as

well as Satan) "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." What do these words mean? Setting aside this book, the New Testament only uses them in ascribing praise to God in such texts as, To whom be glory for ever and ever." In the Revelation they are applied to the reign of Christ but their commonest use is to designate the eternal existence of God, who is repeatedly spoken of as the One "that liveth for ever and ever" Why is it so used? Clearly because Scripture language contains no phrase equally strong to describe continued, immutable existence. Now, if the strongest phrase that can be applied to the eternal existence of God Himself is here used with respect to the torments of Satan and the companions of his doom, it is surely meant that these sufferings are eternal in the fullest and largest sense of the word, everlasting, enduring without cessation and without end.

No doubt the phrase means "to the ages of ages," and when applied, as in the Old Testament, or in reference to Christ's kingdom, to the things of this world, it means, of course, during the ages of this world; that is, as long as the world lasts. But in the passage before us this application is impossible, since at this very time the world comes to an end, the punishment of Satan being at the close of the thousand years' reign, which is the last stage in the world's history. No limitation therefore to the term of this world's existence is here possible. The words are spoken on the threshold of a boundless eternity over which no measuring line of dates and epochs is thrown. In that eternity the self-existent God is declared to live "for ever and ever." In that eternity the torment of the lost is said to endure "for ever and ever." Surely it becomes those saved by grace, instead of replying against God, silently to bow our heads before this unfathomable mystery, and adore the goodness which has delivered us by such a ransom from so fearful a doom.

Nor are these words used of the three great offenders alone. Those who worship the beast and his image "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever*, and they have no rest day nor night." (Rev. 14: 10, 11.) These, many of whom are "slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse," are raised for judgment after the world has "fled away," so that any limitation of the punishment by the ages of the world's existence is, in their case as in the other, impossible. Their doom therefore, like that of the beast and the false prophet, is an eternity of suffering. And this surely removes all

question as to the sense in which the other phrases used on this subject are to be interpreted. "These shall go away into eternal punishment" must mean the same punishment which others, cast into the same lake of fire, undergo, and this is, as we have seen, in the fullest sense of the words, "for ever and ever."

It is easy to quibble about phrases. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," is, no doubt, a figure; but is it a figure of transient or of unending suffering? Does our Lord in thrice repeating these solemn words mean that, though the worm dies not, the people on whom the worm feeds do die? that, though the fire is not quenched, the people who are tormented in it cease to exist? Surely this is trifling with the words of God. What does a man sentenced to a limited term of imprisonment care whether the prison in which he is confined is a permanent or temporary structure? What does a man condemned to be stretched on the rack care whether the rack will last for an indefinite time, or will be destroyed immediately after he has been tortured? All they are concerned about is the time during which they suffer. So, if the worm and the fire are figures of punishment, how can it affect those doomed to a limited period of such suffering to know that after they have ceased to suffer the instruments of their torment will exist for ever? If words are to be understood in their ordinary sense, the torment spoken of is eternal, unending, as the existence of God Himself.

#### THE RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT.

(Verses 11-15.)

This understanding of the words "for ever and ever" throws an appalling gloom over the scene which next rises before us. Christ "must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." The judgment of the quick has already been completed. It only remains that the dead should be summoned before His tribunal also. The believing dead have had their part in the resurrection to life a thousand years before the end of the world, but "the rest of the dead" are still, throughout the thousand years' reign, in their graves, for they live not again until the thousand years are finished. Now, however, is come "the time of the dead that they should be judged."

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before [not "God," but] the

throne; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and Death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death [even the lake of fire]. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (vv. 11-15.)

The end of the world is now come. Before the face of Him that sits upon the great white throne, the earth and the heaven fled away. Nature is dissolved, the present order of creation disappears, to make way for that new creation which God will bring in upon the ruins of the old. The time has come when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3: 10.) This is the last act in "the day of the Lord," and at this supreme moment we have now arrived. All that man has been living for, the world and his own works in it, his riches, his greatness, the mighty monuments of his skill, the cities he has built, the empires he has founded, all on which his pride and his affections were fixed, vanish as a waking dream – "there was found no place for them."

But though man's works are gone, though the very earth has melted away, man himself has not perished. Those yet in their graves belong to Christ, not, alas! for salvation, but for judgment. "Thou hast given Him power over *all flesh*, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him." (John 17: 2.) Some are given to Him that He may bestow upon them eternal life; but He has power over *all flesh*; all is His. He has not redeemed all, but He has purchased all the lost as well as the saved. Thus Peter speaks of false teachers, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord *that bought them*, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Peter 2: 1.) His rights, by virtue of the cross, extend to all, and all must bow the knee to Him "of things [or beings] in heaven, and beings in earth, and beings under the earth" – all heavenly, earthly, and infernal, must own His lordship. The redeemed own it in grace; the rejecters of grace must own it in judgment.

He has bought their bodies as well as their souls, and now the hour is come in which all that are still in their graves must hear His voice and come forth to the

resurrection of judgment. to be judged according to the stainless purity of the great white throne. On that throne Christ, not God, is seated; for though God is "the Judge of all" (Heb. 12: 23), He "hath committed all judgment unto the Son," and that "because He is the Son of man." (John 5: 22, 27.) It is God's judgment, because Christ, as the perfect man, perfectly executes God's righteousness; but it is before "the Son of man" that "the dead, small and great," are here arraigned.

And now the great assize begins. "The books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life." These are figures found in Daniel and drawn from the proceedings of human tribunals. There are two books – one containing the works of the dead, for they were "judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works," the other registering the names of those ordained to eternal life. The dead now raised may be divided into two classes, those who died before the reign of Christ, and those who died during that reign. As to the first, their fate is painfully evident. "They that are Christ's" are raised at His coming for His saints. Those who die in the Lord between his coming for His saints and His coming to reign have also part in the first resurrection. All, therefore, that have died "in the Lord" from the beginning of the world to Christ's reign, have already been raised a thousand years, and "the rest of the dead" consists of persons who were not "in the Lord." These are judged according to their works. Their names cannot be in the book of life. Its silence can only witness against them. For them, therefore, there can be nothing but the second death; for "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

As to the other class, those who die during the reign of Christ, Scripture is not so explicit. We read in Isaiah – "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed. . . For as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." (Isa. 65: 19-22.) It is clear, then, that death during the millennium will, in certain cases, be inflicted as a judgment, and of course sinners thus cut off will be raised for condemnation. But is it equally clear that death will happen only as a judgment? Doubtless there will be great longevity in Israel but we are not told that this extends to the Gentiles, or that

even in Israel death is excluded except as a penalty. And if there is nothing in Isaiah conclusively proving that believers will not die during this period, neither is there anything in the Revelation showing that their names may not be found in the book of life when raised in the final resurrection.

It is thought indeed by some, that all, if judged according to their works, must be lost. But in the judgment of the quick described in Matthew 25, the Gentiles *are* judged according to their works, and yet some are saved. Indeed this is always the principle of God's action, for it is said that the dead "shall come forth, they that have *done good* unto the resurrection of life, and they that have *done evil* unto the resurrection of judgment." Now how can any be said to "have done good," and not to "have done evil"? Merely because their evil deeds are blotted out by the blood of Christ, and only the deeds wrought in them by the Spirit are reckoned. This principle would apply to believers dying – if any do die – during the millennium. Where Scripture says so little, one should speak cautiously; but it seems a somewhat strong inference to conclude that *only* the wicked die during Christ's reign, or that, because the judgment is according to man's works, none can be saved. The statement that "whosoever was *not* found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" suggests, at least, a different conclusion.

We repeat, however, that if any are saved in this resurrection, it can only be believers dying during the millennial age. Its general, if not universal, character is, therefore, that of doom. It is the solemn knell of the second, the eternal, death. The countless millions of sinners who have perished in their sins, the millions who have heard the word of God's salvation and rejected it, the millions who have been "almost persuaded," but not quite; the millions who have said, "We will hear thee again of this matter," and then turned away to indulge in their lusts; the amiable, the upright, the religious, the self-righteous, who have been too good for Christ – all will be there. Not one can escape. "The sea gave up the dead which were in it." "Death and Hades," the resting-place of the body and the home of the spirit, "delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works." Nor are these merely the works seen by man, for in that day "God shall judge the *secrets* of men by Jesus Christ." (Rom. 2: 16.) To all, except, perhaps, the class already named, there is one fearful doom. "Death and Hades," it says, "were cast into the lake of fire," all their crowded vaults emptied into this gulf of endless woe. "This is the second

death."

It is strange that these words, which seem to bid an eternal farewell to hope, should be urged as an argument against the eternity of punishment. True, fire is a symbol of destruction, but destruction does not necessarily involve annihilation. In this case it has not this force, for the beast and the false prophet, as well as Satan, were cast into the lake of fire, but instead of being annihilated, are there "tormented day and night for ever and ever." Again, there is nothing in the second death which implies annihilation. Where in Scripture is death used with this meaning? Does a man dead in trespasses and sins mean a man who does not exist? Does the first death put an end to conscious being? The rich man and Lazarus, to say nothing of the thief on the cross, are a sufficient answer to this question. On what ground, then, can it be argued, in spite of the plain declaration that the lost shall be tormented "for ever and ever," that the second death means annihilation? Alas that men should rather seek to blindfold themselves to the horrors of the coming wrath, than escape it by casting themselves on the infinite riches of divine grace!

#### THE ETERNAL STATE.

Revelation 21: 1-8.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." (v. 1.) These words are taken from God's promise to Israel: "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." (Isa. 65: 17, 18.) But though similar language is used, the New Testament vastly expands its meaning. The state of things in the millennial age so differs from that previously existing, that it is figuratively described as a new heaven and a new earth; but the context shows that the change is only from the present condition of the world to the infinitely more blessed condition it will assume, both physically and morally, under the reign of Christ. This is the scope of Old Testament prophecy; but the New Testament brings us to the shores of the boundless eternity which stretches beyond, and bids us gaze on the new heaven and the new earth of this unending age.

Peter describes believers as "looking for and hasting

unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless," he adds, "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter 3: 12, 13.) In the millennial earth righteousness *reigns*; but wickedness, though repressed and judged, still exists. It can hardly be said therefore that righteousness yet *dwells* on earth; that is, has the earth for its suited, settled abode. Moreover the day spoken of by Peter is after "the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." It is not therefore in the millennium, but after both the millennium and the world itself have vanished away. During Christ's reign the physical condition of the earth will be greatly improved; but in the age spoken of in the Revelation it is entirely altered. Before Him that sat on the great white throne "the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." Now all is new. "There was no more sea." This implies a total reconstruction of the globe and its atmosphere, as well as of the physical organization of those inhabiting it. These new heavens and new earth are therefore quite different from those named by Isaiah.

Another striking feature may be noticed. In the verses we are now to look at the Lamb is not mentioned, only God. This is quite different from the millennial earth, where Christ reigns, having had it put in subjection to Him as Son of man. The order of events sketched by Paul will explain this. He says, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He said, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15: 21-28.)

Now this passage explains the order of events. Death having entered by man, Christ takes His place as man to bring in resurrection. He Himself rises the first-fruits of the new creation, then His people at his coming. His



reign follows, lasting till every enemy is subdued. In this reign He is still the subject man, receiving dominion and power from God, and exercising it in obedience to God. The last enemy subdued is death. Now this is the stage at which we have arrived in the Revelation – His reign has been sketched, his enemies subdued, and last of all death itself defeated and destroyed. What comes then? Christ yields up the kingdom to the Father, and God, not the Father, but God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is "all in all."

When God is adored as Creator (Rev. 4) the Son is unseen; God alone appears. And as in the past eternity, before the first heaven and the first earth were created, so in the future eternity, after the first heaven and the first earth have passed away. Then again God will be all in all; not exercising His dominion through a man, even the Son in man's nature, but in His own eternal sovereignty as God. This is just what we find in the brief description of the eternal state given in the Revelation.

In this eternal state the Church, symbolized as the holy city, and also as the bride, has a glorious place: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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." (vv. 2, 3.) It is said of the new Jerusalem in the millennium that "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." (Rev. 22: 8.) In the eternal state the Lamb is not seen; for Christ has given up the kingdom to the Father, and God is all in all. But the city will still be, as during the millennium, God's dwelling-place; for when it is seen coming down out of heaven there comes "a great voice," saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them."

Paul declares believers to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2: 20-22.) The Church then is designed to be God's dwelling-place. Now it is "an habitation of God through the Spirit." In the millennial age "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it" In the eternal state God, who is all in all, will make it His tabernacle. Such is the marvellous destiny of the Church. It is a "mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by

Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3: 9, 10.)

But the Church will also retain its glory as the Lamb's wife. True, God will then be all in all, and to this end Christ, as man, will have given up his rule into the Father's hands. But Christ, though not administering God's government as man, will never cease to be man, and will never cease to love the Church, "which He hath purchased with His Own blood." He will still love her as his own flesh, and in the new heaven and the new earth she will still appear "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

The figure of the Church as God's tabernacle recalls the camp in the wilderness, where God, descending from heaven, had His dwelling-place constructed after the heavenly pattern, in the midst of Israel, thus marking them as His people and showing Himself to be their God. The resemblance, however, only extends to the manner in which God dwelt among them in a tabernacle suited to his own glory. In other respects all is contrast. In the wilderness were sin and death, weary wandering and unsatisfied expectations, distance from God and trials of the journey. In this eternal scene of bliss sin and death are unknown, or remembered only as vanquished foes. Here is no more wandering, for all have entered into the rest that remaineth for the people of God; no more expectation, for every longing of the heart has found complete satisfaction. Distance from God is no more known, for the glorified saints are fitted for the presence of Him who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil." And the trials and sorrows of the wilderness have been left for the unclouded rest and joy of the desired land.

How wonderful the change! "And [God] shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 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." (vv. 4, 5.) What marvels are condensed in these few words! When God created the world and man He saw that all was very good. Alas! the deceiver entered, and fearful havoc was soon made in this fair scene. Sin fell with its withering blight upon creation, and this world, acting in independence of God, became a wilderness of death and sorrow, of tears and pain. But now the Son of God has been made man to redeem a people for Himself

and for God, to save them from their sins, and to bring them into that dependence from which alone happiness can flow. Here we see the blessed and eternal fruits of His toil — God, in His infinite holiness, able to take His place in this new creation, and to shed around the blessings of His love to a happy and dependent people; all tears wiped away; death with its dark shadow blotted out of the scene; pain and sorrow for ever gone. Such is the blessed lot of those among whom God can dwell. How different from the ruin and misery of a world which knows Him not. Do our hearts answer, with a sigh, that such riches of glory are beyond our powers to conceive? How graciously God stoops to meet our weakness and reassure our faith! "And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."

How, then, are these blessings to be secured? "And He said unto me, It is done [or, "they are done"]. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all [or, "these"] things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (vv. 6, 7.) How cheering, after these unspeakable glories have flashed before our eyes, to be told that the Eternal One, the first and the last, is pledged to accomplish them on our behalf, and that they are ours *freely*. The second death is the portion of man by nature; for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." But to the thirsting one, whose parched soul feels its need of the gift of God, is given "of the fountain of the water of life freely." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst," says our Lord; "but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4: 14.)

There are two conditions, and two only — the thirst and the conquest. "He that overcometh shall inherit these things." But does not this imply some power, some merit, on the part of man? Not at all. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5: 4.) Israel overcame Pharaoh's host, not by their own strength, but by God's. To us, as to them, the word is, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." (Exod. 14: 13.) When Satan accused the brethren before God, "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;" that is, by their faith in the work of Christ and the word of God. And so against all the array of adversaries that Satan and circumstances may gather against us, "in all these things we are more than conquerors *through Him that loved us*." (Rom. 8: 37.)

The Eternal One has pledged his word that they who thirst, and put their trust in him, poor, empty sinners who come to draw from His infinite fulness, shall inherit all these surpassing blessings and glories which it is the delight of his heart to bestow. Alas! however, there is another side to this picture. "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." (v. 8.) How solemn the contrast. We are now in Gods eternity, alter all the ages of this world have rolled their course; in that trackless ocean of time which stretches out into the immeasurable future. In this limitless expanse two classes, each living, each fixed in its present condition "for ever and ever," stand before us. The thirsting one whose lips sought the water of life, who leaned on the might of God for victory, shall inherit nameless glories and blessedness in His presence for ever. The unbeliever, the doubting one, who refused the message of God's grace, or, left to himself, pursued the desires and follies of his own corrupt heart, will receive eternal perdition, the unending misery of the second death.

Not one ray of light struggles through the blackness of this dense cloud. It is the final, irrevocable doom. Restoration and annihilation are the wrecker's fires by which Satan seeks to deceive his victims till they are dashed to pieces on the rocks of eternal judgment. God holds out the steady light of His word to save men from these false guides, and to direct their eyes to the true channel, His own way of salvation, by which alone they can escape the wrath to come. He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, and still the voice of Him who died for the lost goes pleadingly forth, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and. are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Thus in hopeless gloom for the unbeliever, and in cloudless glory for the believer; ends this brief vision of the eternal state. "The second death" shuts in its jaws the refusers of grace, those who "loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." The presence of God, including in itself all other blessings, sheds an eternal radiance of joy and glory over those who have believed in Him. Scripture furnishes no other light with respect to this period, this boundless stretch of future existence in which God is all in all. We are set for a moment on its shores to gaze into its fathomless immensity, permitted to catch one glimpse of its surpassing glories and one wail from its unending woes;

then the curtain is dropped, and the prophet's vision turns away to other scenes.

#### THE NEW JERUSALEM.

Revelation 21: 9 to 22: 5.

"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.) The sudden change of scene and person shows that this is not a continuation of the vision we have just been looking at. A new person comes as John's guide, perhaps the same that had shown him the harlot before, but not the one in whose presence he had just been. This guide opens to him a new sight; one, indeed, which he had already beheld in a general way in his vision of the eternal state, but whose detailed glories are now to be fully unfolded to his eyes.

One great feature of the seven vials was the fall of Babylon, which prepared the way for the marriage of the Lamb, and the appearance of the bride. The angels, therefore, who poured out these vials are fitting messengers sent to show, first the judgment of the false wife, amid next the glories of the true. It was one of them which came to John, and talked with him, saying, "Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters." (Rev. 17: 1.) It is one of them which now again comes and talks with him, saying, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." The similarity is not accidental. It shows a connection which intensifies the contrast between the two things thus symbolized. What is the direct opposite of the false church which, however widely spread, has its roots in Rome? Surely the true Church, which has its roots in heaven, where Christ, its life, is. To contrast Jerusalem under the Messiah's reign with the false system of religion which has borne the name of Christ, would be altogether without point. The false thing must be contrasted with the true, the counterfeit with the genuine.

Both the false and the true Church are set out under two very different symbols. Looking Christward, the false church is the harlot, and the true Church is the wife. Looking manward, the false church is Babylon, the habitation of confusion, and the true Church is Jerusalem, "the habitation of peace." The harlot is decked out in a gaudy rube fitted to dazzle the world; the bride is arrayed in a white garment, pleasing to the

eye of Christ. The great system framed according to man's will is a moral chaos; the great system moulded according to God's mind is the display of perfect symmetry and order. No doubt the symbolic description of the true Church is borrowed from Jerusalem, just as the symbolic description of the false church is borrowed from Babylon. But this no more proves the real Jerusalem to be meant by the one description than the real Babylon to be meant by the other. On the contrary, if we admit Babylon to be a figure, we must admit Jerusalem to be a figure also, each morally perfect, but not to be confounded with the reality.

Indeed, that this New Jerusalem is not a real city seems obvious, for it is described, not as the dwelling-place of the bride, but as the bride herself, whose marriage with the Lamb has already been celebrated in heaven. Its form too, as shown in the following verses, though exquisite as a symbol of the divine symmetry of the true Church, is impossible as the shape of a real city. Besides, the description of the millennial Jerusalem given by Ezekiel, while bearing some resemblance, is for the most part a striking contrast, to the glorious vision here beheld.

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem [or "the holy city, Jerusalem"], descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." (vv. 10, 11.) When he saw the judgment of the harlot, he was carried "away in the spirit into the wilderness," the home of desolation and death. When he sees the glories of the bride, he is carried "away in the spirit to a great and high mountain." Mountains, in Scripture, are often used, both symbolically and literally, as the scenes of glorious visions. It was from a mountain height that Balaam was forced to exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" It was from a mountain height that Moses saw stretched beneath him the glorious land he was not permitted to enter. It was on a mountain height that the Lord Himself was transfigured before the eyes of His bewildered disciples. The figure here is taken from Ezekiel's vision, when he was carried to the land of Israel, and set "upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south." (Ezek. 40: 2.) But the resemblance only brings out more clearly the difference of the two visions. In Ezekiel the earthly character of the scene is marked. The place of observation is "the land of Israel," and the city is on the earth. John's place of observation is not connected

with Israel, and the city is not on earth, but "descending out of heaven from God."

The symbol of a city being adopted, the name given is naturally that of the city in which God will have His delight, the city of peace, Jerusalem. But it is the heavenly Jerusalem in contrast with the earthly, and blessed and glorious as the earthly city will be, what are its blessings and glories compared with those now set forth in connection with this holy city descending from heaven? It has "the glory of God." Its light is "like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." In an earlier chapter, He that sits upon the throne is "to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." (Rev. 4: 3.) The Church appears, therefore, in the glory of God Himself: All the brilliancy of the jasper, all the transparent purity of the crystal "the glory of God," meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in light," such is the Church after Christ has presented it "to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" but "holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5: 27.)

"And [it] had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates." (vv. 12, 13.) In Ezekiel the city is also quadrangular, having twelve gates, three on each side, named after the twelve tribes of Israel. (Ezek. 48: 30-35.) In both cases there is complete order and symmetry; in both cases a connection between the city and Israel. But in Ezekiel's city it is an earthly connection; in the city in the Revelation it is a heavenly connection, for at the gates are twelve angels. The gate is the place where the judges sit, and it was promised the apostles that "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 know not, indeed, how the saints will exercise judgment, and the vision here is manifestly symbolic. It agrees, however, with our Lord's promise in showing some kind of connection between the Church, or heavenly Jerusalem and the earthly government of God having Israel for its centre.

The "wall great and high" suggests separation and security. Everything defiling must be shut out from God's dwelling-place as out of the tabernacle of old, and perfect security beyond the reach of evil is the blessed portion of God's redeemed people. "And the wall of the

city had twelve foundations, and in them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (v. 14.) The Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Some may ask, Where is Paul, the special depository of Church truth? In a literal description it would of course be necessary to make the numbers accurately agree with the number of apostles. This description however is not literal, but symbolic; and in symbolic descriptions this literal accuracy is not needed. Twelve is often used as a typical number where it is not strictly adhered to in fact. Thus Scripture always speaks of the twelve tribes, when in reality there were thirteen; and our Lord promises that the twelve apostles should sit on twelve thrones judging Israel when one of them was a "son of perdition." In common usage convenient typical numbers are retained as descriptions, though the actual numbers may differ. Thus in many trades a dozen is used, not to mean twelve, but some arbitrary number deviating from twelve. "A hundred" was at first a division of our own land inhabited by a hundred families. The name is still kept, though perhaps not one division has now the hundred families from whence it was originally derived. So here the perfect symbolic number is used without reference to the individuals which make it up.

The wall is what fences a city off from the world without; the gate is what gives it communication with the world without. In that which marks the exclusive distinction of the Church the apostles appear; in that which marks its relationship with the world the twelve tribes appear; for the apostles are the foundation course of the Church, whereas Israel is always God's first thought in His government of the world. In that which symbolizes the going forth of the Church's authority towards the world Israel therefore naturally comes into prominence.

"And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." (vv. 15-17.) Once more we note the symbolism of Ezekiel, both as to the measuring reed in the hand of the man who shows him the city (Ezek. 40: 3). and as to the quadrangular form of the city itself. But again the differences are thrown into bolder relief by this designed parallelism. In Ezekiel the measuring reed is of ordinary



construction, suited to an earthly city; in the Revelation it is a golden reed, the type of divine righteousness, suited to the dwelling-place of God. In Ezekiel the city is large, becoming a splendid earthly metropolis; in the Revelation the city is vast beyond all possible earthly limits. In Ezekiel it is of the quadrangular form, often used in Scripture to indicate perfect earthly symmetry; in the Revelation there is another dimension, a height equal to the length and the breadth, showing a perfect cube, a still higher order of symmetry, heavenly in character, and manifestly unsuited to the earth.

It is surely no mere coincidence that the Holy of holies in the temple was of the same cubic form. "The oracle in the forepart was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof: and he overlaid it with pure gold." (1 Kings 6: 29.) Now David gave to Solomon "the pattern of all that he had *by the Spirit* of the courts of the house of the Lord." (1 Chr. 28: 12.) His plans therefore, like those of Moses, were formed after a heavenly model, and had a typical signification, so that the cubic form of the holiest place in the temple was an inspired type of the perfect symmetry of that "habitation of God" which formed the pattern of these earthly structures. Here too the number of administrative perfection twice appears in the twelve thousand furlongs which is the length of the side, and in the twelve times twelve, or one "hundred and forty and four cubits," of the height of the wall.

The measure is "the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." The standard therefore is after the measure of man, not in his earthly body, but in the body he will have after resurrection, when he is clothed upon with his house which is from heaven. In these "spiritual bodies" the "children of the resurrection" are said to be "equal unto the angels" (Luke 20: 36), and it is to this new condition that the standard of measurement is conformed. The scene, though all symbolic, is throughout symbolic of the heavenly, and not of the earthly. The symbols are, of course, borrowed from the earth, but each has a heavenly stamp impressed upon it.

"And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." (v. 18.) Jasper, as we have seen, is symbolic of "the glory of God." Gold typifies the righteousness of God, not in His government, but in His nature. Thus the Church shares the righteousness belonging to God, the saints being made morally "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1: 4.) The glory of God, also, the jasper wall, hems it in, at

once defending it from all intrusion of evil, and maintaining it in that holy separateness which becomes His chosen habitation. A cube entirely inlaid with gold was the typical dwelling-place which He took in Israel. A cube of "pure gold, like unto clear glass," is the symbolic representation of the "holy temple," the "habitation of God through the Spirit," here set before us in the heavens.

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 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." (vv. 19-21.) The names of the apostles are engraved on the foundations of the Church, but Christ Himself is the true foundation. As in the breastplate of the high priest the perfections of Christ, gleaming in the precious stones, were linked with the tribes whose names were cut upon them, so here the manifold perfections, and beauties, and glories of Christ, the true foundation, bear up the Church in its heavenly brightness. The foundation of all is jasper, "the glory of God;" for it is on Christ as "the Son of the living God," the One in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," that the Church is built. Then comes the stone on which the elders of Israel had seen God Himself standing, when "there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." (Exod. 24: 10.) Then, completing the perfect number, follow the varied yet harmonious beauties centring in His matchless person, all sustaining that Church which He has built for His own delight and for God's habitation, that wondrous structure which only divine wisdom could have planned, only divine grace could have erected, only divine glory could uphold.

"Every several gate was of one pearl." The Church itself is the "one pearl of great price," which, on account of its exceeding beauty and preciousness in His eyes, Christ "hath purchased with His own blood." And in every avenue of approach God will have the memorial of this beauty and preciousness preserved. At each portal the "one pearl" meets the eye. If "the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it," they cannot approach its gates without beholding how precious this blood bought assembly is to the heart of Christ. Its streets, too, are "pure

gold, as it were transparent glass." The sea of glass occupies the same place in the heavenly temple that the sea of water did in the earthly, the change showing that while on earth there was constant need for purification, in heaven there is fixed, unalterable purity. So in this scene. On earth, though sin cannot be imputed to the believer, there is constant liability to defilement in his walk, and the washing of water by the word, so beautifully typified in the washing of the disciples' feet, is constantly needed to restore communion. In this scene defilement of walk is just as impossible as imputation of sin. The path for the feet is the gold of divine righteousness, and the transparent glass shows that the need of cleansing is there unknown. All is spotlessly pure, transparently stainless, and the heart and the conscience are free to hold uninterrupted fellowship with God.

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (v. 22.) The city itself; or the Church, is a "holy temple," an "habitation of God through the Spirit." There could be no temple here; for a temple is a place where God, though deigning to dwell, is yet hidden. Outside, God is not seen, but only His dwelling place; inside, one is in the immediate presence of God Himself. Believers even now have access there, into the holiest of all, though the rent veil. There needs no temple, no veil, to separate them from God. So in this marvellous vision. The Church is, as it were, the perfectly -proportioned, innermost shrine in which God dwells, the holy of holies, of pure gold and heavenly symmetry, in which the throne and presence of God find their habitation.

And as there is no temple, nothing to hinder the immediate glory of the, divine presence shining in its midst so there is no need of any other authority or any other light. "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.) All created light, all created authority, however necessary here, will be superseded there by the perfect light shining in the glory of God and the person of Christ. Nor is this all. The Church will radiate the light it receives. "And the nations [the words "of them that are saved" should be omitted] shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto [not "into"] it." (v. 24.) Christians are placed here to "shine as lights in the world." (Phil. 2: 15.) Alas what poor, dull lights, what faint, glimmering reflections of the glory of Him who came as "the light of the world," even the most devoted

and holiest believers are. And what is the power of shining? Not the effort to do so, but gazing upon the glory of Christ. Moses' face shone, though he knew it not, because he had been in God's presence. Believers' faces shine when they, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." (2 Cor. 3: 18.) But the time is coming when believers will behold Christ face to face, and will bear His image perfectly; when He Himself shall "be admired in all them that believe," and there shall be no dimming of the glorious light in which they shine. "We shall be like Him; *for* we shall see him as He is." (1 John 3: 2.) And as with believers individually, so the Church as a whole will be the perfect manifestation of God's glory, suited for His own chosen habitation.

"The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour *unto* it," not *into* it. They will not enter the Church, but will render it the joint homage which is meet for "the bride, the Lamb's wife;" for when Christ reigns, and "all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him," then the Church will reign as His royal bride, the sharer of His universal dominion and universal homage. "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations unto it." (vv. 25, 26.) There is perfect security. The night, in which evil can encroach unseen, has no place here. We are children of the day, children of the light. This is even our present standing, though our failure to walk as children of the light should fill us with grief and shame. But there all will be manifested, all will be perfect. Of the Church it will then be true, as of God Himself, that in it there is "no darkness at all; for it will shine with God's light."

The nations, like their kings, will do homage to "the Lamb's wife" as sharing the throne and glory of the Lamb Himself. This shows that the Church is here seen, not in the eternal, but in the millennial state. Its own condition will indeed be for the most part unchanged in the eternal state; but there will then be no nations on the earth, no kings to bring their glory and their honour to it. All this belongs to the earth in the divided condition which begun at Babel, and continues even during the millennium. But it has no place in the new earth, from which all trace of the failure and sin of the old creation is for ever blotted out.

As the figure of a city is consistently maintained, the heavenly saints are spoken of as its inhabitants. "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.) God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil;" and if believers are saved, it is only because He has made them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." No evil can exist in the presence of His light. The jasper wall, His own surpassing glory, is a perfect wall of separation between His dwelling-place and all that defiles, all that is abominable, all that is inconsistent with His own holy truth. None can be there but those "written in the Lamb's book of life;" those whom He has fitted by His own grace for His own presence.

But it is not only in authority, not only in glory, that "the bride, the Lamb's wife," is associated with the Lamb Himself. The city will also be as the dwelling-place of God, the fountain-head from which streams of blessing gush forth to the millennial earth. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Rev. 22: 1, 2.) The symbolism here is that of Ezekiel, but with differences which show that the earthly things are only types of the heavenly. In Ezekiel there is a real river of water issuing "from under the threshold of the house eastward" (Ezek. 47: 1), and going forth to heal the waters of the Dead Sea. "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." (v. 12.)

The earthly things are moulded after the heavenly. Thus the earthly Jerusalem is fashioned like the heavenly, four-square; but in size and form suited to this world. The Holy of holies, God's earthly dwelling-place, is fashioned like the heavenly, of the same form and the same material, but with dimensions fitted to its earthly character. From the temple, God's dwelling-place in the earthly metropolis, the waters flow forth to spread life and fertility over the barren parts of the land, and to heal the bitter waters of the sea of death. From "the throne of God and of the Lamb" in the heavenly metropolis streams forth the river of the water of life; not to the land only, but to all mankind. Trees with fruit monthly

renewed "for meat," and with leaves "for medicine," are on either side the stream renting out of the earthly city. But "the tree of life," of which the overcomer shall eat, is on either side the stream of the water of life flowing out of the heavenly city; and besides its fruit for the overcomer, its leaves are for the healing, not only of those in the land, but of the nations. Thus while the earthly Jerusalem is especially the centre of blessing to the land of Israel, the heavenly Jerusalem is the centre of blessing to the whole earth; for wherever we deal with the earthly things, Israel has the foremost place; but the circle of the Church's interests is wider, and in its blessings Jew and Gentile are alike partakers.

There is no "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," no tree of responsibility now. That tree, whose taste brought death, was withered up by the cross, where all our broken responsibilities were met; and met so perfectly, that we now "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here therefore "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" disappears, and "the tree of life" alone flourishes. Those dwelling in "the paradise of God" eat of its fruits; but in the millennial earth, where evil, though checked, still exists, "the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Here again it is clear that the time described is not the eternal state, when all evil is done away, but the millennial age, when healing is still needed.

"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and his name shall be in their foreheads" (vv. 3, 4.) Among the nations of the earth there is still the curse, not constantly abiding, but occasionally coming in as the punishment of sin; for "the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed." (Isa. 65: 20.) Here, however, in this heavenly Jerusalem, "there shall be no more curse." How can there be for those who have been conformed to the image of God's Son? They are a people whom God has fashioned for Himself for His own dwelling-place, and therefore "the throne of God and of the Lamb" is among them. They are His servants, and now none other divides their allegiance with him. Unreservedly "they serve Him." Serve whom? it may be asked; God or the Lamb? Here, as often in John's writings, no distinction is made; both are spoken of as one. There is but one throne named, but One whom they serve, but One whom they see, but One whose name is written in their foreheads. Everywhere the same truth meets us - "I and my Father are one." They are His chosen companions, seeing as they are seen, for they behold His face; and they are specially

claimed as His own, for "His name shall be in their foreheads." They shall then bear perfectly the moral imprint which, alas! it is often so difficult to discern in his saints now. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see him as He is." (1 John 3: 2.)

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever." (v. 5.) This is, as it were, the summary of the blessings enjoyed by the heavenly saints, the Church, in the millennial state. And what a summary! All darkness gone for ever; God Himself, not now through instruments, but in His own person, their blessed source of light, shining upon them in all His glory, and they able to rejoice in the glory; the saints reigning with Christ to the ages of ages during the whole millennial cycle.

Such is the Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the heavenly Jerusalem, during the thousand years' reign. The figures used may vary. The affections of Christ may be brought into prominence by presenting it as the bride; its relationship with the earth may be symbolized by picturing it as a city; its wonderful place in the counsels of God may be shown forth by delineating it as His dwelling-place. But whatever the figure used, the prominent thought is the surpassing glory and blessedness of that assembly which God is now calling out to be formed into one body, and to be for ever associated in peculiar closeness with the Son of His love. What a contrast the moral glories here portrayed with the sad, ruined, failing condition of even the true Church as we now see it in the world! God's thoughts and love are not deflected from their purpose by our failure; but should not this very fact cover us with shame that our failure has been so great?

#### CLOSING WARNINGS AND EXHORTATIONS.

Revelation 22: 6-21.

The Revelation, strictly speaking, ends with the vision of the New Jerusalem, for the following verses are not so much a part of the Revelation itself as words, spoken by the angel or by the Lord, pressing the truth and value of what is revealed upon our hearts. "And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets [or of the spirits of the 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.) No book so marvellously unfolds the heavenly glories awaiting the saints; no book so emphatically repeats the assurance that these things are "faithful and true." The Old Testament name of Lord God, His title of God of the spirits of the prophets, the angel messenger sent, and the relationship of servants ascribed to the saints – all fit in with what we have seen to be the prophetic character of the book. But there is a difference between these prophecies and those of the Old Testament, which they so strongly resemble. In the Old Testament the events foretold are spoken of as distant; here they are spoken of as "things which must shortly be done." The reason is, that the Church period is always counted outside the course of time. It is an interval, a parenthesis, which grace may lengthen, but which at any moment may be brought to a close. Believers are, therefore, to be constantly expecting the coming of the Lord. His word to them here is, Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

What is meant by keeping these sayings? During the Church time the greater part of the judgments predicted in this book are yet future, and how then can the sayings be kept? To treasure up the sayings of God is, however, always profitable. It is not necessary even that they should in every case be intelligently understood, much less that they should immediately affect ourselves. The historical development of the events foretold may not be divinely apprehended; but the great principles of God's righteous judgments, culminating in the glory of Christ, may be clearly discerned through the thickest haze of misinterpretation in which the book can be wrapped.

Has the Church, then, been faithful? Alas! something more than misunderstanding has helped to obscure the truth. The great feature of the book is the failure of Christendom. It stands out in the letters to the seven churches, in the corrupt, apostate Babylon, and in the great Gentile power of the last days which, though embracing none but Christian lands, falls into the most hideous idolatry and rebellion against God. Now this utter failure of the Church as a professing system, though the great feature of the book, is just the feature which Christians have refused to see. The Spirit had warned the Gentiles that they stood by faith, and that if God had not spared the natural branches, the Jews, they insist take heed lest He also spare not them. Instead of taking heed, they became high-minded, and did not fear. If God's word be true, therefore, they must be cut off:



This the Revelation points out; but the Church, fancying itself secure, has never dreamed that judgment is awaiting it, and, shutting its eyes to the solemn truth, has accepted any interpretation but that which thus appealed to its conscience. Had it bowed to the truth concerning the judgment about to come upon the house of God, this apostacy could never have taken place. But it has failed to keep "the sayings of the prophecy of this book," and high-mindedness, worldly ambition, and departure from its true character as waiting for Christ, have been the sad results.

"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book; worship God." (vv. 8, 9.) Now, as before, when John fell down to worship the angel, it is the sight of the glories of the Church that overwhelms him. Then he had beheld "the Lamb's wife" "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white;" now he has been gazing on the dazzling vision of the New Jerusalem. On each occasion the angel refuses worship, associating himself with John, and his brethren the prophets, and those "which keep the sayings of this book."

"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (vv. 10, 11.) Daniel was told to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." (Dan. 12: 4.) This is quite different from the directions here given, where the prophecy is not to be sealed, "for the time is at hand." Neither prophecy has, however, yet received its fulfilment. Why, then, should the first be spoken of as far distant, and the second as at hand? Why should the first be sealed up as papers only wanted at some future time, and the other left unsealed as papers wanted for immediate use? To say that Daniel's prophecy was six hundred years earlier than the other will not suffice; for if two thousand four hundred years is a distant date, so is eighteen hundred years; and if events eighteen hundred years off are said to be at hand, why may not events two thousand four hundred years off be said to be "at hand" also? The explanation lies in the character of the present epoch, during which no dates are given, and no time is reckoned. None is to put off, even in thought,

the Lord's return. This being a momentary expectation, the whole Church period is passed over, and the only time counted is the short interval after the Church is taken. Then God's dealings with the world in government are resumed, and the preparation for the restoration of Israel and the reign of Christ is again carried on.

When that time comes the moral condition of men will be fixed. The unjust will remain unjust, and the filthy will remain filthy, the righteous will remain righteous, and the holy will remain holy. Clearly this cannot apply to the present day of grace. It is a warning that "the time is at hand;" for the day of grace is passing, and no calculation of its continuance can be made. These judgments are therefore to be regarded as near, and when once come, the call to repentance will sound no more, the blessed will be eternally blessed, the wicked eternally wicked.

Hence the speedy return of the Lord is again pressed, and now by the Lord Himself; for up to this point it has been an angel speaking, though sometimes in Christ's name, but henceforth it is Christ speaking in his own person. "[And] behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." (vv. 12, 13.) In the Revelation the two parts of the Lord's second advent, His coming for his saints, and His coming to judge the world, are often spoken of in the same language. Morally they resemble each other, being both acts of judgment towards the world, and both bringing blessing to the believer, The believer is taken to glory by the first act, manifested in glory by the second. The world is left over for judgment by the first act, brought under the execution of judgment by the second.

The important point is, then, not the order of events, but the great fact that Christ is coming, and that when He does come, He "will render to every man according to his deeds." (Rom. 2: 6.) This is the invariable principle of God's righteous dealings, and is in no respect weakened by grace. Grace, it is true, lays our sins on another as our substitute, and credits us with the good deeds wrought in us by God's own power; but this confirms the principle instead of contradicting it. If an upright man winds up his affairs, he collects what is due to him, and pays what he owes. Nor is the justice of this course affected by the fact that certain debts have been remitted, or certain obligations incurred, out of kindness. So God's righteous judgment according to works is in no way impaired by the fact that the believer's

sins have been put away, and the believer's righteousnesses have been wrought, by his own grace.

These righteous principles, being as eternal and immutable as God Himself, are followed by the declaration of Christ's own character as the eternal One, "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

The consistency of righteousness and grace is shown in the next verse: "Blessed are they that wash their robes [not as our version has it, "do His commandments"], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." (vv. 14, 15.) Thus while righteousness has been declared the principle of Christ's judgment, grace is the foundation on which the blessing of the redeemed is based. The "right to the tree of life," which is in the midst of the paradise of God, is not "keeping the commandments," or any goodness on man's part, but the righteousness of "the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," because he has washed his robes, "and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This, too, is his title to "enter in through the gates into the city," or to become a member of the Church of God. For unless thus washed, he is in himself defiled, and must remain without, classed among the dogs, or unclean, the sorcerers, the whoremongers, the idolaters, the murderers, the lovers and practisers of falsehood, who have no place in the holy city.

Having thus declared the principles of righteousness on which He will act at His second coming, the Lord closes the book with a few weighty and solemn words. "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." (v. 16.) There is something beautiful in the way in which the Lord, when thus closing his Revelation, speaks to the beloved disciple, not in His official character, but for a moment in that personal name by which he had known and loved Him here on earth. It is as though He had said, True I am the eternal One, the supreme judge; but for all that I am still that same Jesus with whom you walked in Galilee, that same Jesus on whose breast you leaned at supper. He is also "the faithful and true witness," and as such He has, through His angel, testified the coming ruin and failure in the churches, But still He is the hope alike of the earthly and of the heavenly saints. To the earthly saints, whose portion consists in the fulfilment of the promises made to David, He is "the root" of David, or the

One to whom all the promises owe their origin, and also the offspring of David, the royal seed to whom they all point To the heavenly saints, the Church, He is the perennial hope, the harbinger of the coming day, "the bright and morning star."

And this draws forth the response, prompted by the Spirit, from the heart of the bride; "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 of the water of life freely." (v. 17.) The true attitude of the Church, the bride of Christ, is always to be waiting for his coming. He is her hope. The declaration that He is "the bright and morning star" naturally awakens the longing of the bride, and the Spirit, speaking through her, joins in the invitation to "come." And still the word of grace is going forth, telling of Jesus as a Saviour, so that he who hears may receive the word and be able to join in the cry; "Let him that heareth say, Come." Nor will He who bid the weary come to Him for rest, and the thirsty for water, leave it only to others to proclaim the word. Once more His own voice goes forth in tender solicitation – "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." How cheering these words of grace, these earnest loving appeals, at the close of this book of judgments. They seem to say, "The day of retribution is fast approaching, but the day of grace still lingers; eternal life is my free gift. Before it is too late, come, drink of this fountain which will satisfy for evermore."

The one-sidedness of man always leads him to set grace and judgment in antagonism, whereas the many-sidedness of God's word gives to each its proper place. After the tender words of invitation just uttered, it is solemnly instructive to see the rampart with which God shelters this book of sevenfold judgments from any intrusion of man's reasoning and unbelief. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book [or from the tree] of life, and out of the holy city [and from the things], which are written in this book." (vv. 18, 19.)

What is meant by adding to and taking from this book? It does not mean only the open infidelity which refuses it as God's word. No doubt it would include this, but it includes much more. The professing Church has practically

set aside this book, not through mere misunderstanding, which is not here referred to, but because its character and hopes took a worldly instead of a heavenly type. It refused to believe itself under judgment, and thus took from this portion of God's word. It assumed its own universal dominion and triumph over evil, and its own continuance to the end of time, and thus added to this portion of God's word. No doubt many of God's children, who reverence His word, have been misled by this false traditional belief, and have in all simplicity and honesty adopted a system of interpretation founded upon it. We need not say that the judgments here denounced against those who tamper with God's word have no application to such. But to Christendom as a whole the guilt is chargeable, and on Christendom as a whole the penalty will fall. Babylon, which, instead of repenting and clothing herself in sackcloth, like Nineveh of old, has "said in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow," will have added unto her "the plagues that are written in this book."

The denunciation only extends to those who shall add to or take from the words of this particular book; but it must not be inferred that God regards a similar treatment of other portions of His word with greater indifference. The fact that this book would be so wrested from its true meaning as to blind men's eyes to the failure and judgment of Christendom, has indeed caused God to invest it with a special sanctity, not only pronouncing a distinct blessing on those who read it, but a distinct curse on those who slight it. But the principle is true of Scripture generally. To add to God's word, or to take from it, must bring judgment. Those who set their minds and wills in opposition to God's can have no part in the tree of life or in the holy city.

And now come the Lord's closing words, words at once of warning and of hope: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (v. 20.) They are words of warning, for is it not time that Christendom should wake from its sleep, and instead of indulging in the dream of universal dominion, own the ruin and failure which its apathy has brought in? They are words of hope, for what can be more cheering to the true saint of God, who sees that all has failed on man's side, than the thought that the Lord is coming to take His waiting people to Himself and afterwards to establish His throne in righteousness on the earth? Hence, when His voice is heard, "Surely I come quickly," the heart response of His people goes forth, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." So closes this book, the writer only adding the parting salutation, "The grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ be with you all [or with all saints].  
Amen" (v. 21.)

#### SUMMARY

It perhaps assist the memory, and thus give a clearer grasp of the whole book, if we seek once more to map out on a small scale the wide tracts of time and space over which the Spirit leads us in this revelation of the ways of God.

As far as the earth is concerned the book is almost exclusively a book of judgments. The earthly glories of the kingdom are scarcely seen. On the other hand, the heavenly glories of the kingdom, and especially of the Church, which were entirely hidden from the Old Testament prophets, are unrolled in dazzling splendour before our eyes.

God reveals Himself as Creator and Judge, as Jehovah, who entered into covenant with Israel, and as the Almighty, the author of the promises to Abraham and the fathers. Christ bears throughout the character of the Son of man to whom judgment is committed. The Holy Ghost is seen in the manifold activity of His ways as connected with the government of God, not in His present unity as baptizing all believers into one body. In the first part Christ appears clothed in judicial garments, and walking amidst the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the seven churches. He makes a revelation concerning "the things which are," the church period, and "the things which shall be after these," or the things that will happen after the church period. (Rev. 1.)

#### THE THINGS WHICH ARE.

The Church as a responsible thing here on earth is first brought under review, and its melancholy decline set forth. As a professing body it has utterly failed, though always containing true believers, the overcomers to whom special rewards are promised. In Ephesus the first symptoms of that fatal malady which at length undermines the whole system are discerned, not by any outward marks visible to the eye of man, but by those subtle manifestations which the searcher of hearts too surely detects. First love is withering, and though in Smyrna we see a temporary revival under persecution, in Pergamos we find the affections transferred to the world, and evil hateful to Christ lightly tolerated. In Thyatira the gangrene has spread, and evil is not only endured, but delighted in. Thorough corruption has eaten into the very

vitals of the Church, and henceforth the overcomers are only a feeble remnant holding the truth in the face of opposition, and looking for the Lord's return as their hope. In Sardis there is a partial recovery as to outward purity of doctrine and practice, but no real restoration of vital power; the mass dead, the rest ready in die. Philadelphia shows much weakness, but a faithfulness and dependence which call forth the Lord's approval. Laodicea displays activity and fancied power, but with no sense of or true humility before God; hence the lukewarmness which makes it nauseous to Christ, and leads to its final rejection. (Rev. 2, 3.)

Such is the sad prophetic outline of the Church on earth. The coming of the Lord for His saints forms no part of the scheme of this book; but its true place is after the third chapter. It is the event for which the overcomers were bidden to look, and though naturally omitted in a record of judgments, it must necessarily occur before the professing Church is spued out of Christ's mouth.

#### PRELIMINARY JUDGMENTS.

From this point therefore we enter on entirely new scenes. The true Church has disappeared from the earth. God, as Creator, sits on the throne of judgment, encircled with a rainbow, the token of His covenant with the earth, and surrounded by the twenty-four throned elders who represent the redeemed, including the true Church, in glorified bodies in heaven. Christ, together with the Father and the Spirit, is here adored as God and Creator. (Rev. 4.) But God next appears occupied with the execution of His counsels preparatory to the establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom. Christ is no longer seen walking in judicial robes among the candlesticks, but as the executor of God's purposes of wrath upon the earth. He comes forth as the man who is found worthy to unfold and carry out God's judgments contained in the seven-sealed book. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David, the One who is to accomplish all that God promised to Israel and its royal house. He takes His dominion, however, not in virtue of His divine power or dignity, but as the slain Lamb, the obedient One, to whom, because He had stooped to death, every knee must bow. The adoration already commences, and by anticipation is even perfected, in the worship of the elders, of the angels, and finally of all created things. (Rev. 5.)

With the opening of the sealed book the stream of preliminary judgments begins to flow, and continues to

the close of the eleventh chapter. It is divided into two portions, the milder judgments of the seals, and the heavier ones of the trumpets. These correspond with the two divisions in the prophecy of our Lord, who speaks first of "the beginning of sorrows," and afterwards of the great tribulation immediately preceding His own glorious advent. The first six seals disclose wars, famines, pestilences, and persecutions, ending in a mighty social convulsion which excites general terror and consternation. The martyred saints cry for vengeance in a way unsuited to this dispensation, but in perfect accordance with the voice of the waiting saints, who look for deliverance from Christ's coming and reign, as prophetically recorded in the Psalms, (Rev. 6.) After these judgments there is a pause, during which a remnant of one hundred and forty-four thousand, consisting of twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, is sealed for preservation; while the eye is also permitted to glance forward and behold a countless throng of Gentiles who are brought out victoriously from the great tribulation. (Rev. 7.)

Then the seventh seal is opened, and the judgments of this terrible hour, each ushered in by the solemn sound of a trumpet, fall in awful succession upon the earth. The first four indicate dreadful suffering (Rev. 8.); but the last three have a specially fearful character, and are designated "woe" trumpets. (Rev. 9.) During the second of these woes we see God's purposes clearly brought out. Christ, as a mighty angel, takes possession of the earth, and a proclamation is made that on the sounding of the last trumpet the mystery of God will be finished. John receives an open book, and is told that he must prophesy again concerning peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings, thus unfolding God's purposes about the government of the world. (Rev. 10) The prophecy therefore proceeds to show us God in connection with Jerusalem, where, though He has a people and witnesses, the Gentiles still reign and the mass of the Jews are still in unbelief. The beast, the last head of the Roman Empire, now revived with Satanic energy, exercises authority in the city, and causes the witnesses of the coming Messianic kingdom, notwithstanding their miraculous powers, to be put to death. The earth rejoices at their destruction, but speedily stands aghast as it beholds their dead bodies supernaturally quickened and taken up to God, whose wrath further manifests itself in a destructive earthquake. The time of the witnesses' prophecy and the beast's ascendancy in Jerusalem, as recorded in this chapter, is the three and a half years of Gentile rule directly preceding Christ's glorious advent. On the sounding of the seventh trumpet joy breaks



forth in heaven over the establishment of Christ's kingdom, the reward of His saints, and the judgment of His adversaries. Details are not given, but such is the grand event over which the heavens rejoice. (Rev. 11.)

Here the continuous narrative breaks off. But God has other purposes to reveal. Having already shown that He is now occupied with Israel and Jerusalem, we have His thoughts concerning these central points of His earthly government further unfolded. The ark of the covenant again appears in the temple in heaven. (Rev. 11: 19.) Satan's hostility to Israel, symbolized under the figure of the dragon and the woman, is brought to light. He vainly attempts to destroy Christ, the man child, who is caught up by God into heaven. The Church interval is then entirely passed over, and the events of the last days of Israel's sorrow, before her final deliverance, are revealed. Michael the great prince who stands up for Israel, drives Satan, their enemy and accuser, out of heaven, who, coming to the earth full of rage, because he knows that his time is short, persecutes the woman and her seed, or the faithful Jews who are looking for the Lord's advent. But his designs are frustrated, God providing a refuge in which the saints are sheltered from his malice. (Rev. 12.)

The instruments whom Satan uses in this persecution are then shown. The first is the beast, or the head of the Roman Empire, whose revival is filling the world with astonishment. The prince by whom it is resuscitated is the last head of the Gentile monarchy, and is specially endowed by Satan as the god of this world with dominion and authority, which he uses to further Satan's object in persecuting the saints now looking for the Messiah's kingdom. Worship of God is set aside, and the beast not only renders religious honours to Satan, but claims them for himself. He has in Jerusalem a wicked co-adjutor, who, gifted by Satan with miraculous powers, presents himself to the Jews as their Messiah, and persuades them to worship the beast and his image, inflicting death on those who refuse. Such is the state of things in Jerusalem, just before Christ returns to set up His reign of righteousness over the earth. The period during which this unparalleled tribulation endures – the period of Satan's persecution, the beast's rule, and the anti-christ's deceptions – is three and a half years, or the last half week of Daniel's prophecy. (Rev. 13.)

Having now shown us the evil agencies at work, we are next called aside to see God's purposes in the midst of all this. Permitted to look to the end, we behold the persecuted remnant who had fled into the wilderness

brought into power and blessing in the millennial earth. We then hear the proclamation of the everlasting gospel, or God's claim as Creator, set forth, followed by the denunciation of judgment against Babylon, the corrupt profession of Christianity still remaining in the world, and against those who worship the beast and his image; while at the same time an announcement is made of the blessed lot of those who henceforth die in the Lord. Two classes of judgment are also foretold as awaiting the Gentiles, the discriminating judgment indicated by the harvest, and the unsparing outpouring of wrath symbolized by the treading of the wine press. Such are God's thoughts and designs concerning this world, which seems to be abandoned to Satan and his tools. (Rev. 14.)

The prophet is then allowed a brief glimpse at the blessedness of those who have died in the Lord during this dreadful season, after which he is called to witness the preparations for pouring out the seven vials in which the wrath of God is filled up. (Rev. 15.) These follow, and are generally of the same character as the judgments under the trumpets, though seemingly of shorter duration and greater intensity. Towards the close they pave the way for the final catastrophe, the armies of the world being gathered to make war with the Lamb, and judgment being at length executed on Babylon, the corrupt system which has usurped and dishonoured the name of Christ. (Rev. 16.)

The true character of this system in God's sight, its abominations, and its connection with the Roman Empire, are next portrayed. But the head of this empire and his confederates at length turn against it, and inflict upon it a terrible destruction. Its overthrow is recorded first under the figure of the harlot, the abandoned woman who claimed to be the bride of Christ, but was really the paramour of the world (Rev. 17) and next as a vast worldly and political system, symbolized by the expressive figure of a great city. (Rev. 18.)

#### CHRIST'S COMING AND REIGN.

The pretended wife being thus signally judged amidst the rejoicings of heaven, the true wife, the real Church, is beheld in heaven, clothed in white raiment, which typifies the righteousnesses of saints; and the marriage of the Lamb takes place. Henceforth the elders are no more seen, some of the united company which they represented forming a part of the Church, and being thus included in the bride, and others being among the friends of the Bridegroom. And now all the preparations are

completed, and the time for Christ to take the kingdom, together with His heavenly bride, has at length come. He issues from heaven, girded with majesty and power, and accompanied by His saints. The time to judge the great destroyers of the earth has arrived, and the beast and the false prophet are captured, and cast alive into the lake of fire, while their armies are destroyed by the sword of Him that sits upon the horse. (Rev. 19.) Satan too is bound, and thrust into the bottomless pit, where he is confined a thousand years. (Rev. 20: 1-3.)

Judgment having now been executed, the reign of Christ and of His saints commences. These saints comprise three classes those who were raised and taken to heaven before these judgments begun, whom we have already seen under the figure of the four and twenty elders, and two companies of martyrs, who suffered death during the persecutions of this time. All have their part in the first resurrection, the resurrection of life; all are made priests of God and of Christ; all reign with Him during the thousand years of His dominion over the earth. At the close of this period Satan, being loosed for a short time, stirs up a vast insurrection against Christ's rule, which is crushed by flames coming down from heaven and destroying the rebels, while Satan himself is finally cast into the lake of fire. Then comes the end of the world, accompanied by the resurrection of those who are still in their graves. This is the resurrection of judgment, in which the risen ones are summoned before the great white throne, and there tried according to their works. The vast bulk, or perhaps all, not being found written in the book of life, are thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death. (Rev. 20.)

Having thus brought us down to the end of this world's history, we are allowed one glimpse into that eternal state in which God is all in all. There we see the Church as the bride of Christ, and also as the tabernacle of God. There we see God dwelling with the redeemed in the new heaven and the new earth, where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things have passed away. At the same time we see the lost enduring the deathless anguish of the second death. (Rev. 21: 1-8.)

The Spirit then carries back our gaze to the millennial state, where the glories of the bride are figured under the radiant vision of the New Jerusalem, gleaming with the glory of God, fitted in its symmetry and holiness for His own dwelling-place, the seat of His throne, and the reservoir from whence His blessings stream forth to the redeemed earth. (Rev. 21: 9 to 22: 5.) After this

magnificent vision, a few words of tender encouragement, and also of solemn warning, close this marvellous book. (Rev. 22: 6-21.)

We have thus traced the record of God's purposes and judgments from beginning to end of this "Revelation of Jesus Christ." We have seen the highest glories which God's grace can bestow, and the deepest abyss into which man's guilt can plunge. We have seen man under grace, rejecting and despising it; man in responsibility to God, turning in rebellion and blasphemy against Him. We have seen Satan working behind the human instruments whom he employs, and bringing upon this wretched world woes and judgments which the heart sinks to contemplate. Looked at from man's side, all is failure, misery, ruin. But God is above all, and Christ, the man of God's right hand, is victor over all. The professing church may fail on earth, but the true Church shines forth in His own glory in heaven. Man's earthly government may end in blasphemy and rebellion, but He will take the reins into His own hands, and carry out God's purposes of righteous government and blessing for the world. Satan may rage for a while, but in the end he is cast into everlasting torment. Death may reign ever a sinful world, but death itself is at last destroyed, and sin is banished for ever from the presence of God. May the Lord grant, as we close the record of His own ways, a deeper sense of the utter ruin and lost condition of man, and a fuller confidence in the boundless grace and exhaustless resources hidden in Christ.