

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

(Rev. xxi. 9—xxii. 5.)

PRINCIPLES DEDUCED FROM THE SYMBOLS USED,
AND APPLIED
FOR PRESENT GUIDANCE IN THE CHURCH.

BY G. J. S

“His servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.” (Rev. xxii. 3, 4.)



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SYNOPSIS.

Three things true of the Church from the general appearance of the City.

1. Heavenly in character - - - Descending from *Heaven*.
 2. Divine in its source and origin - Coming down from God.
 3. The vessel for God's glory - - Having the glory of God.
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SEVEN SPECIAL PRINCIPLES.

1. *Light* is the first idea of the Church.
Shining as a crystal-like Jasper stone.
2. The glory of God for protection and exclusion.
The wall of Jasper, &c.
3. Perfect provision for entrance; Christ's thought of the Church; the place of administration.
The twelve gates of pearl.
4. The walk of the Saints—Righteousness and Purity.
The street of gold, &c.
5. The immediate presence of God known there.
No temple, &c.
6. No natural or artificial light. God and the Lamb only source of light.
No sun, moon, or candle.
7. The Holy Spirit ministering Christ as the full fruition of the tree of life.
The pure river of the water of life.

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

REV. XXI. 9; XXII. 5.

IT has been rightly said, "If you want to know what the Church (or anything that God has instituted on earth) ought to be, there are two ways of discovering it: one is by looking at it when it was first planted on the earth; the other, by looking at what it will become in the end as to the work of God's hand." We may thus turn to Pentecost and to Paul to see what the church is; or we may turn to the portion at the head of this paper to see what it will be in the coming day; and we shall get principles from the latter, in what is described there in symbolic language which should actuate and guide us here. God would always have the church on earth answering to what it will be up there in glory.

It is true the church is viewed in scripture in many other aspects; God delighting to set it forth in all its beauty. Thus in Matthew xvii., its distinctive place in the kingdom is set forth *relatively*—Moses and Elias symbolizing the saints raised or changed, caught up to be for ever with Him there, and entering into that which was always the symbol of Jehovah's immediate presence, the Shekinah. It is a blessed thing to see thus what it is God has in view

for us, basing our thoughts upon the Word of God, and resting assured that He will carry out His own purposes, spite of all the seeming contrariety to Him in those who compose the church in the present day.

If we look around us at the church as it presents itself before all to-day, we may well wonder at the expression in Ephesians v. 24, "As the church is subject to Christ;" while it is manifest in everything around that professes to be of that church that it is thoroughly unsubject. But it should read "*subjected*." That is the normal condition of the church; it is put into the *place* of subjection to Christ. Alas that it should not have retained that place!

In our scripture the church is viewed in a peculiar aspect. It is identified with the bride, the Lamb's wife; but it is not as the bride that it is described. That view of the church is peculiar to Paul. But the bride is mentioned to shew the identity of that which is described with it; while the description is that of a city which is connected with the government of the earth, though itself not of the earth; and this is one of the aspects of the glory of the church in the coming day. It will be through the church that God will rule the world. (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.)

If we turn to Matt. xviii., we see there that the church is put upon earth to be the centre of God's administrative government there *for His people now*. Israel, which *was* God's centre, is set aside, and the church takes its place. The judges in Israel were called Elohim (Ex. xxi. 6, 22, &c.), and everything in the government of God was referred to those whom

God Himself established to act under and for Him (Deut. xvi. 18); but we see in the Psalms, long before the present dispensation, that righteousness and judgment were divorced; and it is also a common saying to-day that law is not justice; but there is a day coming when "judgment shall return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it. (Ps. xciv. 15.)

In Matthew xviii., then, Israel is set aside, having rejected Christ as their Messiah, and being themselves rejected; and the Lord says now, "If anyone offend you," after having gone through several steps, "tell it," as a court of appeal, "to the assembly" (ver. 17)—not to the judges. Here, for His people, the church takes the place on earth of that which God had before set up in Israel. And though scripture inculcates subjection to the powers that be, as of God, "The powers that be, are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1, 2); yet the Christian should recognise the direct government of God in the assembly. "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust and not before the saints?" (1 Cor. vi. 1.) "Tell it to the church," and "If he neglect to hear the church," give us a very important principle. We need to recognise it more, and to see that God's voice is in the church in certain cases. We have heard so much of "Hear the church," that we are in danger of forgetting that there are occasions when we must hear the church. Not as the one who propounds the truth; the church is indeed the house of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth, but it never *teaches* the truth. On the contrary, it is *taught* by teachers given

of God. But there comes a time when the voice of the church must be heard. Alas for those Christians (and how many there are) who refuse to recognise the voice of the Lord in the assembly! Yet God has no other court of appeal on earth for His people *now*.

As we have seen God, does recognise the government of the world as such, as under His hand, but it is not His direct government for His people. In Ephesians vi. 12 we read, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world." It is clear that the devil has a very great place in the government of this world, and the nations, spite of the fact of the profession of Christianity. Who ever heard in scripture of compelling men to be Christians by force of arms? It is under the hand of the god of this world, the devil. The church though in the world is not of it, and should recognise heavenly principles entirely, and be governed by them; and by that church, God will in the coming day govern the world. We see this is in the millennial city, the perfection of administrative power in which God will be known. The city hovers over the earth, and the glory of God will be seen in her.

It is to be observed that our scripture presents a millennial scene. Verse 9 begins an entirely new description. We have continuity in the book from the beginning of chapter xix. to xxi. 8. And then—what is so usual in the Revelation—the Spirit of God in the prophet turns aside to give a full-length picture of some distinctive feature; here, of the millennial, heavenly city. Previously in chapters xvii., xviii., you

get the false thing, Babylon, and its destruction, fully entered into. This, no doubt, will take place before the Lord Jesus Christ comes in judgment. There are some very peculiar features about the church ; it is the last thing God revealed, while the first in His mind as set forth by the first type in scripture. Eve taken out of Adam and presented to Adam as bride (Eph. v.), tells us, is a type of the church ; but it was never developed throughout the Old Testament ; nor in the New, indeed, until Christ had ascended and sent down the Holy Spirit. After Stephen is slain, Saul is called out to bring out this truth about the church, and so to fulfil the word of God. But while it is last revealed, it is completed first. All the Old Testament prophecies remain in abeyance until the church is brought out and completed. It has been said, "The Jewish train has been shunted to let the church express through." And then its apostasy is the first thing that is brought under judgment ; before the Jewish and before the Gentile apostasies. Chapter xviii. presents this judgment. The very power which carries this false thing, simply for its own aggrandisement or adornment for the moment, hates her, and turns round and destroys her ; so that she is judged before the Lord comes in judgment. The true church is gone to be for ever with Him, and the false thing is judged.

Verses 1-8 of chapter xxi. give the eternal state ; and then the prophet turns aside in verse 9 to give a full-drawn picture of the church in the millennial state, under the figure of that holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem.

We turn now to the points of detail, or principles which apply themselves to what the church should be in the present day ; for what God purposes as the end, is always that which He uses in order to make us conformable to that end as we pass on the way to it. It must be noted that the whole thing is a symbol. The Revelation is a book of symbols, not mere figures. A symbol though figurative is more than a figure. It often combines circumstances and characteristics which give that which is morally or historically true in the whole of the course of that which it represents. Babylon is an instance (chap. xviii. 8); *here* it is what is and ought to be, true of the church.

THREE THINGS FROM THE GENERAL APPEARANCE OF THE CITY.

There is first that which is general; in ver. 10 we read, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God; having the glory of God." Three things are here spoken of it generally, before we come to the seven special principles detailed in this description for us.

1. First, it is heavenly in character. It descends out of heaven.

2. It is divine in its source. It comes from God.

3. It has the glory of God. This last is set forth also by the Jasper wall. Chapter iv. 3 claims this part of the symbol (Jasper) as representative of Him that sat upon the throne—His glory. These things are what will be proved to be true of the church in the

coming day, and what it should be manifestly to-day—Divine in its source; heavenly in its character; and the vessel for the glory of God. Alas, that the heavenly character of the church should be practically denied!

1 AND 2.—DIVINE IN SOURCE, HEAVENLY IN CHARACTER.

1.—There may be that which is divine in its source and *earthly* in its character, but not the church. Israel was that of old, and will be again. On the other hand, it might be heavenly and *angelic*, but the church is not that; we have not an angelic scene here, but though the church is divine and heavenly, it is composed of men like ourselves, redeemed out of this world. What a wonderful destiny there is before us! But all this is no less true of us to-day. Who will say that the church is not divine in its source? Who first thought of it? It was God! We may well say of it:

“O God, the thought was Thine!
(Thine only it could be),
Fruit of the wisdom, love divine,
Peculiar unto Thee.”

Who spoke of it first? It was Christ! And how did He speak of it? He says, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” And who was He? He was the One whom Peter had confessed as “The Christ, the Son of the living God.” It is *His* church; built upon the earth, it is true; but destined for heaven, and heavenly

in character now. If you deny its heavenly character you deny the very genius of the assembly. Not but that you may be of it; you are not saved unless you are of it; for there is no salvation out of the church. It is a blessed thing to be in the church, although one may have wrong thoughts about it; but what a solemn thing to have wrong thoughts about that which bears God's glory and to which one belongs!

Another thing that indicates its heavenly character we have in verse 16. It is a *cubical* city. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. Now, there can be no doubt that the various mathematical figures used in scripture are used symbolically. Thus, in the description of the earthly city, in Ezekiel xlviii., it is described as a square; but here the heavenly city is a cube. A square sets forth earthly finite perfection: a cube, heavenly finite perfection. You come *regularly* to an end of it every way. The holiest, both in the tabernacle and the temple, was a cube—it set forth heaven. A circle or a sphere gives the thought of the infinite, and this the ancients recognised, when they made a serpent with its tail in its mouth as a symbol of the infinite. There was no end to it. The cube, then, 'sets forth finite perfection, which brings in the creature, but of a heavenly character. The infinite can only refer to God and the Godhead.

THE VESSEL OF THE GLORY OF GOD.

3.—Then it has the glory of God. The church is the vessel of His glory, not only in the distant future,

but also in this present scene—everything is to be done to the glory of God. As Christ has received us, so we are to receive one another to the glory of God; but this will be looked at later on.

Now, what is true of the whole is true of each one who composes the whole. We find this in 2 Cor. v. 1, where we read, "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Here two of these three things are stated of the individual: (1). This building is 'of God,' or divine in its source and origin. (2). It is 'eternal in the heavens,' or heavenly in its character throughout eternity. Surely the believer should be so now, since it is true of every saint when his tabernacle house is taken down. How many thank God for this last? But is it so, that one is thankful that one has in the future that which is divine and heavenly, but that one cannot act upon principles consistent therewith to-day? Then, again (3), each one is to be a vessel of the glory of God down here. This is carried to such an extent by the Apostle, that he says, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." We should not eat merely to satisfy our hunger, but because the body is the Lord's, and is to be sustained in this scene as the vessel for His glory.

It is important that we apply these principles to our present state here on earth; that we maintain this heavenly character individually. If we walk as mere men, and belonging to earth, we belie our true character. What a wonderful thing it would be to see a

company of heavenly men upon earth ! John Bunyan describes something of this when he puts Christian and his companion in Vanity Fair, unattracted by its glories, and with eyes looking straight before them, as though occupied with what lay beyond ; which so enraged the men of the place that they put them into a cage. Should we not draw more of this kind of thing upon us, beloved, if we were more heavenly in our ways ? It was said by the Maories, of some of the Missionaries who went out to New Zealand, that, while they talked about heaven for the Maories, they were anxious to get as many broad New Zealand acres for themselves as they could. It was a denial of the very thing they went to preach.

If it is true as we sing, beloved, that we are

“Born from above, and heavenly men by birth,”

shall we act as though we were not satisfied with our portion ? Are we not satisfied to walk through this world as our Master walked through it, and so display the moral glories of that heavenly Man ? It is written, “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” May the Lord touch our hearts and consciences about this ! There are few of us who do not need it.

Every believer, then, is divine in his source, and heavenly in his character, and a vessel for the glory of God, down here. This accepted, and a thousand difficulties are disposed of at once. Men make the church earthly, and this is contrary to the glory of God. It is a *heavenly* thing, and the people who com-

pose it are heavenly—"born from above;" though as to their natural birth, children of Adam—born from beneath. When Jesus came, He said, "Ye must be born again," or from above; there must be an entirely fresh start. A Christian is one whose starting point is this new birth, in the which a new nature has been communicated to him. It is from a divine source, and it is heavenly in its character—heaven is its home. He was therefore never intended to settle down here on earth; that was given to the Jew. Heaven alone constitutes the Christian's true and proper sphere and hope.

If, then, the Lord has constituted the church divine and heavenly, surely it is not possible that He has not given us enough to guide us down here in divine and heavenly principles for His glory until He comes. Turn back for a moment to its beginning, and look at it as it was then. Unworldly! Unearthly!! It drew out the hatred of the men of the world. Beware of men, the Lord says. Alas! how little heed is paid to the warning now! The church has settled down; adopted earthly principles, so that we hear of the *Christian world*!! The external professing thing has fallen into that which denies these two principles—that it is divine and heavenly, and consequently there is not that to be seen in it which makes for the glory of God.

We have, also, combined in the symbols under which this city is set forth, all the creatorial, governmental and providential glories of God. Angels are now the agents in God's hands, of His governmental and provi-

dential dealings as set forth in Ezekiel and elsewhere in the word. But our chapter shews that this will all be in the hands of the saints. God takes it out of the hands of the angels, and puts it into the hands of the saints. Angels fall back to make room for the redeemed. Angels are gatekeepers in this place. The city is not composed of angels, but of human beings, who are redeemed from sin and Satan. They occupy a place much nearer to God, and exercise functions which the angels there do not exercise; these take the place of gate-keepers, and there is no such thing as envy or jealousy there.

SEVEN SPECIAL PRINCIPLES.

We come now to seven special principles for guidance to-day from the symbols of the heavenly city. They are deduced from the following, viz.:—1. The appearance of the city, Light; 2. The Walls; 3. The Gates; 4. The Street; 5. No Temple; 6. No sun, moon, nor candle; 7. The pure river of the water of Life.

Like most of the Sevens of scripture, these are divided. The division is usually one of two kinds—4 and 3; or, 1 and 3, and 3. These follow the latter order, as is the case with the seven parables of Matthew xiii. The first is from the general appearance of the city; the next three from certain parts described; these are all of a practical nature, and set forth our responsibility here. While of the last three, the first two set forth positive privileges, rendered the stronger by the negation with which they are contrasted; and

the last, in chapter xxii., is the direct outcome of the throne of God and the Lamb.

LIGHT, THE FIRST IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

The first is from the general appearance of the city. Her "shining was like unto a stone most precious, as a crystal-like Jasper stone." (Ver. 11.) This is the first idea of the church. Her "light," or "shining." The word used here only occurs in one other place, Philippians ii. 15. It is *phosteer*, light-bearer, and is used for the heavenly bodies. The first idea is that the church is a light in the world. This should also be true of every assembly of the saints. Christ came a light into the world, and while here he could say, "I am the light of the world" (John viii. 12); but He says also, "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world." (John ix. 5.) But the world would not have him; they murdered Him and put Him out, and He is gone. He is no longer now the light of the world, though still the light of men, who look up into heaven to His blessed face, and see Him there, "The glorious light of courts above." The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is to be found now only in the face of that blessed ascended Man, Jesus Christ. And whoso thus looks up, becomes a light down here; so that the Lord can say to His disciples—true now of us—"Ye are the light of the world."

The shining of the city is as a crystal-like Jasper stone. This is not the natural character of the Jasper, which is an opaque stone; but this stone is crystal-like, and transmits the light. It does not shine by its own

light, as we shall see when we come to the internal light of the city; but the city itself shines and appears as a light to the world, transmitting to it the glory of God. Now, this is what should be practically true morally in the assemblies to-day. Alas for us! how do we answer it? Darkness has crept in, and it is a very dim light the church gives to-day, but through God's infinite mercy there is light, though dim, and there is no light at all outside of it; all there is darkness that may be felt. It has been said that "The difference between the church and the world should be as distinct as that between black and white; whereas it is now all grey." In Christendom all is mingled. The church has stooped down from her high platform to the world that murdered her Lord; and the world has reached up to welcome it. It has done the world a great deal of good in civilising it, but it has done the church a great deal of harm. Constantine's day, so much vaunted in Christendom, was a grand day for the world, but a woeful day for the church.

The Lord shews that this principle of light should be true of individuals, when He says, "The light of the body is the eye. If thine eye be single thy whole body also shall be full of light." (Luke xi. 34.) If one has a single eye (not complex), the first thing is one gets light inside; the next thing is that the light shines out. The man is full of light himself, and then he becomes light—"a body of light." "If therefore thy whole body is light, having no part dark, it shall be all light as when a lamp lights thee with its brightness." (Ver. 36.) The idea here is that the body becomes

luminous, like the *bright* cloud that overshadowed Moses and Elias with the Lord, in Matt. xvii. 5. It was a luminous cloud, the symbol of Jehovah's presence. Thus the body of the man who has a single eye, not diverse or double, becomes luminous. An opaque being in himself, he becomes a transmitter of light in the midst of a dark scene. Or, as Paul says, "It is the God who spake that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6, N.T.) Or, under another figure, he looks straight up to the Christ of God in the glory, and catches the light of that glory and reflects it, as the planet catches the glory of the sun already beneath the horizon, and reflects it here upon the earth. Now, it is peculiar to moral or spiritual light that it shines in the midst of the darkness (see Jno. i. 5). It is not so with physical light, for when the sun rises above the eastern horizon, darkness flees away beneath the western. Yet is there no commingling of light and darkness in divine things, for the darkness comprehendeth not the light.

May the Lord give His people to distinguish between light and darkness, that they may ever be what God has made them. Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. (Eph. v.) Now this light is not to be hid under a bed, or under a bushel. There are snares on every hand. A bed is the figure of ease or slothfulness; a man may settle down and be too indolent to let his light shine; or he may fall under the influence of the mercantile spirit of

the day, and so hide his light under a bushel—a mercantile measure. Do neither one nor other, but let your light *shine*. More than this, “Let it so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Do we know what it is thus to attach the name of our Father to everything we do, so that men may see we are actuated from love to the Father?

The church, then, being composed of such persons, should be a light in the scene, having no part dark. This is the first idea of it here. Do we not need stirring up to it? Where is the company of saints gathered anywhere that knows what it is to have everything conducted in that way? But how blessed to know that it will be so, and how needful to seek it even now.

What a wonderful thing it will be to turn and see that light in the heavens, always shining! No need of the sun or the moon to shine upon the earthly Jerusalem. Scripture, without doubt, sets forth this thought. Isaiah lx. has this distinctly in view. “Arise! shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” (1-3.) And “The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. *Thy* sun shall no more go down, neither shall *thy* moon withdraw itself.” (Ver. 19-20.) Why will the sun be no more the light of the earthly city? Because of that brighter light ever hovering over it, the church, the heavenly city, in mid-air over the earthly city, and

the light of it always streaming down. The Lamb is the light of the heavenly city, but that light streams down through its Jasper walls and garnished foundations, so that it is a real physical light to the earthly city. No doubt all this description is figurative of the moral and spiritual glory of God and the Lamb, yet has it also a bearing as above, as seen in Isaiah lx. And in the case of Saul of Tarsus also, this physical glory is shewn to be true, when he was smitten to the earth at mid-day, by a ray from the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, "above the brightness of the sun" in noonday splendour. That blessed Christ in the glory transcends the light of the sun itself, and He will shine in all His splendour and never withdraw Himself. We see thus distinctly how the church will take up its place as the light of the world. But this is now the first great principle in connection with the assembly; or, an assembly of saints down here upon earth—Light! moral light, and that, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2.—THE WALLS, PROTECTION AND EXCLUSION.

The second principle is deduced from the first of the three points that form the second division of the subject—The Walls. It "had a wall great and high." This gives us two ideas, viz., Protection and Exclusion; and these two things run pretty much together, inasmuch as there must be exclusion in order to protection; but we will look at protection first.

Israel had a middle wall of partition between it and the heathen nations that surrounded it. This being so

it is to be expected that this heavenly thing should be protected from the world through which it passes for the moment, as it will be throughout eternity. Now, when that middle wall of partition was broken down, as it was, on account of Israel's unfaithfulness, Ichabod was written upon them, the glory was gone! God said, "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down." (Is. v. 5.) And mark, beloved, that if we, professing to be the church, refuse to act for the glory of God upon earth, He may say, I will break down your wall, you shall be no more exclusive; and our protection then is gone at once.

This wall is high, so that no one can scale it; and great, so that no one can dig through it. What is the protection of the church? "The building of the wall of it was of Jasper." (Ver. 18.) Jasper, as we have seen from chapter iv. 3, is figurative of the glory of God, so that all that makes for the glory of God is for the protection of the assembly here on earth; and everything that is not for the glory of God is not for the protection of the saints.

On the other hand, the wall excludes all that is contrary to Him who inhabits this city, and this, as we have seen, is necessary for the protection of its inhabitants. "There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination nor maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Ver. 27.) The church is composed of believers. There is room for *all* believers, but there is no room for evil. That

which does not make room for every Christian who is clear of evil is not on the ground of the church of God. Exclusion in this sense is of God, and may not be objected to by any who seek His glory. God demands that there should be a clean break with evil by all who come upon church ground. True there is often association with evil which is not wilful; it may be, some are ignorant of it; but neither will nor ignorance can make God forego his principles. There is, of course, a great difference between the two. Ignorance may be instructed, and should be. Still, if a man is ignorant, he is a loser by it; but when will comes in, God says "Let him alone;" if a man will be ignorant, let him be ignorant. On the other hand, if one is ready to let the light shine in, God never left an honest soul in ignorance, nor ever will. "If any man desire to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John vii. 17.) Surely all Christians ought to be together, but they can only be together upon the ground of the church of God. He will not let in what is defiling, and He will only let me in if I am in separation from evil. Let us remember here that the wall is of Jasper, and that Jasper sets forth the glory of God. Now, we could not let evil in to the glory of God, and we are told to receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God. We cannot alter God's nature; to do so, if we could, would be to throw the whole thing into confusion. Thank God that amid all the failures and frailties and weaknesses of His people, He has maintained His nature and character intact. He has never declined one hair's breadth from

what He is. He would cease to be God if He could, because God *is* what He is. He will maintain the standard, and Himself is the standard. Faith accepts this, and desires no other—"God and the word of his grace." Anything that derogates from the glory of God is contrary to the very genius of the church of God, alike up there in the glory, or down here upon earth, because the principles suited to the glory up there are to guide us as we walk through the world down here.

We may notice further that the measurement of the wall is "one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." (Ver. 17.) Twelve and its multiples are constantly repeated here. There are twelve foundations, and the names of the twelve apostles in them. (Ver. 14.) There are also twelve gates, and at them, twelve angels. The measurement of the city is twelve thousand furlongs. Now, twelve is the numeral that sets forth administrative perfection, and this city is thus set forth in the perfection of its administrative character with reference to the earth. One hundred and forty-four is the square of twelve, which intensifies the idea; and the measurement of the city is twelve a thousand times multiplied. Everything is perfect in connection with this administration.

The twelve foundations have two things said about them, namely: the names of the twelve apostles are in them, and they are garnished with all manner of precious stones. The administrative city is built upon the truth taught by the twelve apostles. We have

not Paul here; the truth he brings out is of a different character, although he does touch upon administration; "The saints shall judge the world," &c. (1 Cor. vi.) But the characteristic line of Paul's truth is the church as the body and the bride. John, on the other hand, is characteristically administrative. In the beginning of this book, the church is upon earth, but as a thing that in man's hands has failed, and is under judgment; and while this judgment is poured upon it here, God is shewing how He will have it up there as the fruit of His own work above the judgment. The twelve apostles lingered about the earthly Jerusalem, and God used them to bring out this wonderful truth upon which the heavenly Jerusalem is founded.

These foundations are decked with all manner of precious stones, and no doubt every stone has its own divine meaning. Be that as it may, it is very interesting to trace the different places where they come in in scripture. They are mentioned in Ezekiel xxviii., in connection with creation (that is, nine of the twelve). Satan is figuratively represented by the prince of Tyrus as the masterpiece of God's creatorial power. "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden in the garden of God; *every precious stone* was thy covering; . . . Thou art the anointing cherub that covereth, and I have set thee so." (Vers. 12-14.) They set forth here the varied glories of God, as manifested in creation, of which Satan was the sum.

Next we find twelve precious stones upon the breastplate of the high priest. Here the all-varied glory of

God is set forth in sustaining a poor and afflicted people, amid all the trials of the wilderness, and now our High Priest is crowned with "glory and beauty," the antitype of the high priest of old in his robes of "glory and beauty," to sustain us down here. We find them again in our chapter, where they set forth all the varied glories of God as the light streams through them in connection with this perfect administration upon earth. Thus we have the glory of God pledged in creation, in sustainment, and in government.

God's providence and government is at present in the hands of angels administratively. The angelic beings in connection with the wheels of God's government upon earth, in Ezekiel i.; and the man Gabriel being sent in answer to Daniel's prayer. Daniel ix., &c., are indications of this; while in the New Testament it was an angel that told Philip to go to Gaza—a providential leading; and an angel delivered Peter from prison, &c. It is said of them also in Hebrews i., "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But all this will be in the hands of the heavenly saints eventually. This is shadowed forth by the difference between the symbolic creatures in Ezekiel and those in Revelation, and this is interesting. In Ezekiel they are "full of eyes round about." (Chap. i. 18.) Not an act of God's government escapes their vision as it occurs upon earth. But in Revelation they have eyes also "*within*." (Chap. iv. 6–8.) By this is set forth that faculty of inward mental percep-

tion—that divine intelligence, which in the understanding of God's *ways*, can give a reason for every act.* None but the saints understand God's ways, and *here* on earth not all of them. “He made known his *ways* unto Moses, his *acts* unto the children of Israel.” All through the Book of Revelation it is not an angel that gives the prophet a reason for God's actings, but an elder, a representative of the redeemed; they will be able to give a reason for everything. Can we do it now, beloved? Can you give a reason for God's actings towards yourself? Many of us are under His hand in discipline; do we know why? He loves those whom He chastens; His blessed hand is upon His saints; but we ought to be able to give a reason for it. Do we not rebuke ourselves as we think of this? Blessed to be among the number, and there are such, who now know the reason of the way of God's dealing with them.

All the truth upon which the wall is built, and the wall itself, demands then, that everything that defileth be excluded from the church, for God's glory and the protection of the saints. If a man cleaves to that which is evil, he is necessarily excluded; if he does bring evil in, God will have it put out. It is not necessary, therefore, that everyone born of God should be at the *Lord's* table. People do not understand the difference between the Father's table, to the feast upon

* I judge that the living creatures of Revelation iv. set forth the heavenly saints as those into whose hands the administration of government and providence will pass; while the elders set them forth as kings and priests, fruit of redemption work.

which all come when converted, as in Luke xv., and the Lord's table; but even at the Father's table it will be found there is discipline, though this be directly in His own hand; and as it is thus in His hand, so, also, it will be unerring and sure.

3.—THE GATES—PROVISION FOR ENTRANCE.

The gates come next. These are twelve, "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." (Vers. 12, 13.) "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl." (Ver. 21.)

While the wall is protection and exclusion, the gates—of which there are twelve, three on each side of the city—shew that there is ample provision for legitimate entrance, and that, in just the quarter you may happen to be; there is no reason for trying to get over the wall. If your name is written in the Lamb's book of life (chap. xxi. 27), and if you have washed your robes, you have a right to the tree of life, and to go in by the gates into the city. (Chap. xxii. 14, R.V.) Come in, come in, thou blessed of the Lord! If one asks, How shall I come in? Just as a Christian. You surely do not want to bring evil into that place, and you will not be admitted if you do. Why remain outside? Why cling to that which is earthly, while God has to-day upon earth that which is heavenly? Oh! you may reply, it is all up with

the church long ago! Christ answers, Not till the church is in glory; then its day of sojourn upon earth will be over, but till then "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." All up with the church! Can you believe that God has given up an object so dear to Him? That for which He brought all this creation into existence, in order that He might carry it out? You may say, alas! It is all broken up in man's hands; but blessed be His name, Christ still builds, and faith ever discerns His working.

There are two things said of those who have a right to enter: "Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life;" and, "They have washed their robes." It will not do to talk of election—blessed fact as it is—as many do, running it almost to fatalism. Even to have the name written is not enough; but such are also washed in the blood of the Lamb before they come in. One may go back to counsel, and become as cold and hard as a stone, but you can never get hardened if you think of Him who gave His precious blood to wash away your sins; and of the infinite value to Himself of every one whom He has thus purchased with His blood. God is not only wonderful in counsel, but excellent in working; great in counsel and mighty in work. What the law could not do, God did. The God who *wrought* in such a marvellous way, "Sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, thus condemning sin in the flesh." (Rom. viii. 3.)

But all who do come in these gates behold in this symbol what the church is to Christ. "Every several

gate was of *one pearl*." This idea is brought out in that beautiful parable in Matthew xiii., the first intimation of the church and what it is to Christ, as that with which He adorns Himself: a merchant-man seeks goodly pearls, and when he had found *one pearl* of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought that pearl. (Ver. 46.) This is Christ giving up everything, even life itself, for the church; as Ephesians v. 25 puts it, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." It is not the sinner buying Christ; that could never be. But, oh! is it not a grand thought that is thus displayed in the gates; so that when one comes into the assembly one sees that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it! It is much grander than seeing that Christ loved *ME*. Many come in with a sense of the latter; but we want the larger, grander thought—the church! I am part of that church which Christ loved. Ah, but one says, perhaps, I do not get all the love in that which I get from "He loved me." Is it not selfish of you to want it all? Think of what is dear to *Him*. What we need is 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." Nothing that does not compass all the saints of God is on the principle of the church of God.

The church on earth as a testimony in man's hands has failed, and there will be no recovery of it. Both the operation of the Spirit of God upon the souls of some of His people will lead them to act upon the principles of the church of God—the principles upon

which it was originated, and which we see symbolised in this city. No dispensation has yet run out in which God did not by His grace give such a testimony, a true revival. When things were at their worst He wrought in some of His people's hearts to give a testimony to the principles upon which the dispensation started. Nothing, of course, may be *claimed*, but it may be expected that God will in His infinite grace have such a testimony to the truth of what the church is at the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if any are faithful, His grace may keep such in it. May the Lord give His people to desire it more than anything else on earth. Heaven alone will fully satisfy the heart; but the next thing is, to be in the current of His thoughts as to that in which His interests are paramount upon earth. It is not all over with the church through His mercy; but as God is God, He will have that which answers to His heart when Christ shall come. May *we* be kept in the current of His thoughts.

Everyone ought to come in at these gates, three on each side—the numeral which sets forth divine perfection. If they will not come in, that is another thing, though that does not prove they are not *of* the body, of which every believer is a component part; the only thing is, they are not all expressing it rightly. Then there is no need to try to get in by some wrong way, for there is a gate to go in by. You need not go to some distant centre (as in olden days every one had to go to Jerusalem), but just exactly where you happen to be you will find a gate to go in at.

We just notice, in addition, that the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel are here, as also twelve angels. Now, the gate is the place of judgment and it is thence the administration issues. Their names being here, then, may indicate that they are the *immediate* objects of the government of this city, and through them the whole earth may be ordered. We may connect with this the promise to the twelve apostles, that "In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. xix. 28.) It is in connection with this city that we first find the throne of God and the Lamb (Chap. xxii.)

The angels hold an inferior position as gate-keepers in this scheme of government.

4.—THE STREET—THE WALK OF THE SAINTS.

In verse 21 we get the fourth point: "And the street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass." This is connected with the appearance of the city itself—"And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." (Ver. 18.) The street naturally suggests the walk; they walk on pure gold. Gold always sets forth divine righteousness, and so the whole city is a display of God's righteousness—whose builder and maker is God. The inhabitants, too, walk upon divine righteousness, and down here they are to be characterised by it. But it is said, "Like unto transparent glass." To get the idea in this, we may refer to other places in this book where it is mentioned: "Before the throne

there was a sea of glass like unto crystal." (Chap. iv. 6.) Again, "I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." (Chap. xv. 2.) This symbol is evidently borrowed from the brazen sea that stood before Solomon's temple. It was filled with water, and was for purification. When we come to heaven, the water is solidified. Why? There is no need of purification there, nothing to defile. That for which the sea was provided has become a fixed eternal fact; the people *are pure*. The fire in chapter xv. shews how this remnant that stand on the sea was purified; it was through fiery judgments; but they were an earthly people; although being slain, they get a heavenly portion. These two things, then, characterise the walk of the saints of the heavenly city—divine righteousness and fixed eternal purity. But that is what God has judicially made His saints to be before Him already. The "new man" is said, in Ephesians iv. 24, to be "created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth." He is also working it in us down here now. If He has given us a nature which is after this sort, and which can rejoice in the display of these characteristics up there, is it to get no manifestation down here? What is the good of thinking and talking of what we shall be there, if we are not answering to it here? What God has made us, indicates what we should be practically, and forms our character as we are occupied with it and Him. If He has created a new man, which we have put on before Him (and

this is the truth about us as it is in Jesus), our walk is to be of that character in righteousness and true holiness.

How can the walk be consistent with divine righteousness? By manifesting practical righteousness down here. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as he is righteous." (1 John iii. 7.) Here is the connection between the two. The measure of our righteousness before God is not the measure of our attainment in it here; but practical righteousness is a proof of a standing in righteousness before God as Christ is. Thus divine and practical righteousness are linked together in one verse. The fine linen, clean and white, in chapter xix. 8, is a practical thing—the righteousnesses of the saint. The worldling cannot understand our being righteous before the throne of God, but he can understand our being righteous in our ways down here; and if this is not the case, he is disgusted with the boast of it.

As to purity, Christ is also our standard; we purify ourselves after the pattern of His purity, and the hope of being perfectly like Him when we see Him is a purifying hope. This is a daily thing; it is a process of purifying down here which ends in fixed purity up there. Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, in order that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it. The cleansing is the washing from defilement, the sanctifying, the leading the heart into the brighter things above, "That they also may be sanctified through the truth." (John xvii. 19.) There is no perfection in us here, but we grow to the perfect

thing, predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

These four things bring out largely what our responsibilities are here on earth. No doubt, as they are carried out, they constitute our privileges also, and we acknowledge them as such under His hand; but these two things act and re-act upon each other. Generally we find that responsibility is in measure according to our privilege. It must not be supposed that because God has dealt with us in grace that therefore He has conferred privileges upon us that bring no responsibilities with them. Let not our shoulders shrink from them.

The other three things present to us the grandest privileges that were ever conferred upon creatures, whether there in that blessed scene where all is made good by God Himself, or here where we *taste* the joy of it, though in a very imperfect way, because of our frailties and weakness.

5—NO TEMPLE.

THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY AND THE LAMB ARE THE
TEMPLE.

The first of these last three is set forth negatively first, and then positively. "I saw no temple therein; but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (Ver. 22).

No temple! that is, no symbolic material temple. The idea in the temple is a dwelling place for God. If we go back to the temple at Jerusalem, we see that

while it indicated God's desire to dwell amongst His people, it at the same time shut Him out from them; they never saw Him at all. True, every vessel and figure of it set forth something of what God was, but the very things given to display Him only hid Him effectually, because of man's unbelief and sin. No one but the High Priest ever even entered the Holiest, and that only once a year, with a cloud of incense which shut out all beyond it. There is no temple now after that sort. As in this city, there is no temple; nothing to shut God out from the inhabitants, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. God and the Lamb display themselves before them continually, abidingly, perpetually. We could not endure it after that sort in our present condition, and yet it is what the new nature craves after, and ever did—the constant abiding presence of the Lord. Thus David of old cried, "Oh God, thou art my God; early will I seek *thee*: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." (Ps. lxiii. 1, 2.) It is not here the temple so much as God Himself. In Psalm lxxxiv., the courts of Jehovah are more before him; but even here it is because of God Himself known there. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." (Ver. 1.) Now, when he reached the tabernacles he had got only the dwelling place of God; yet the inner desire of his soul was not satisfied; it was God Himself he desired.

It is a wonderful thing to have to do with God. Have you ever had a transaction with God, my

reader? If so, that transaction, if only one, surpasses every other transaction you have ever had with any-one. But we want constantly to have to do with Him.

But what temple has God *now* upon earth? Will you go to Jerusalem, or to "St. Peter's," or to "St. Paul's," to find Him? To no building can you go to find Him. Is there, then, no habitation of God upon earth? Yes, blessed be His name; it is in what Christ calls "My Assembly" He dwells—the assembly of the saints. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," is an expression of the assembly, and He says, "there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) What a wonderful place, then, is this assembly! Do we go there, saying, "I am going into the place where God displays Himself?" There is not a *figure* in the Old Testament, whether tabernacle or temple, that you have not a *fact* answering to it in the New. Is not the fact more than the figure? If David could cry, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts," shall not the saint of to-day cry in reference to earth, and not only to heaven, "My soul longs to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary?"

There is no temple to shut out God and the Lamb from His people to-day, for "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20). The saints themselves form the temple; they are they in whom God displays Himself.

In the end of Ephesians ii., we have two things:

first, "The whole building, fitly framed together, *groweth unto* a holy temple in the Lord." (Ver. 21.) In this aspect of it, it is going on to what we have in our chapter in Revelation, where the whole city is a temple in its relation to earth. And, also, we have, "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ver. 22.) This is what is now the case upon earth in any locality, as at Ephesus; the gathered saints form a part of God's habitation upon earth. Peter, too, speaks of the saints as coming to Christ, "As to a living stone, ye also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. ii. 5.) Here not only do the saints form the house where God dwells, but they are also the priesthood which offers up the sacrifices. Nor can these be restrained where all is right in the soul. Is it possible to come into the house of God—the assembly of the saints—and realise the presence of the Lord and remain silent? Alas! the Lord's presence is not sufficiently realised; if it were, the assembly would be a very different place to us.

Oh, beloved brethren, when we come into the assembly of God, what an overawing sense of His presence there must be to faith! What an ever blessed sense in our souls of the grace that has brought us nigh! How the flesh will be kept in abeyance, and how the heart be drawn out in praise! Should we not have spiritual sacrifices to offer? Would not our hearts be bubbling up? Should we not speak of

the things we have made touching the Lord? Alas! instead of that, how often is it we have little to say; and it is not that our hearts are awed by His presence—it is the silence of emptiness rather than of devotion. If we more knew the love of God displayed in Jesus Christ, the two or three gathered to His name would be more like those in earlier days; we should require a little more of 1 Corinthians xiv. 26—not often required now. They seem to have been so full of praise, so bubbling up, that two of them got up to bubble over together. The apostle writes to correct this: "Let all things be done to edification," he says; one at a time. They were quite ready to praise when they came: "Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine," &c. The apostle directs them that they were to be subject to the Lord through the same Spirit that filled them in giving expression to the fulness of their hearts. This is what the Spirit of God would produce in us also—a note of praise that would flow from every heart, and when anyone took part it would be as the voice of the whole. This applies to all those who should take part, and not to *all* generally.

Ah, beloved! there is possible a wonderful unfolding of the presence of God by the power of the Spirit to the soul that comes by faith into the assembly of God upon earth. It is the Lord's Assembly; "There am *I* in the midst." Do we realise it?

It may be well to notice here the difference between the local gathering in scriptural times and now. *Then* being composed of all the believers in a place it formed *the* assembly in that place, and could be addressed as

such. (See epistles to Corinthians and Thessalonians.) Whereas *now* the church being divided, those gathered upon true christian ground are only an expression of the Church in the place and could not be addressed as the church.

There is no temple in the heavenly city, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. It is not here as the Father and the Son, though the same two Persons, and there is nothing to hide the glorious display of their majesty. The term "Lord God Almighty" indicates that God is set forth as the dispenser of the government of the universe, but governing through His people. These are the three names by which He is known in the Old Testament. They are the same three names used in 2 Corinthians vi. 16-18, to which is added the name now revealed of Father. The Lord God Almighty is the same blessed Being revealed to His people to-day under the name of Father!

6.—NO SUN, MOON, OR CANDLE. NO NATURAL
OR ARTIFICIAL LIGHT.

Our sixth principle is deduced from verse 23: "And the city had no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." We may link this with verse 5 of the next chapter: "And there shall be no night there, and they need no *candle*, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God shall shine upon them."

We have here what the source of the light that

streams from the city is; or what is the internal light of the city itself. We have had the city before as light in its relationship to earth; what, then, is the light that lightens this city? No created or natural light—set forth by no sun or moon; and there is no artificial light—no candle. In the tabernacle of old this is also set forth by the fact that there were no windows. No light got in there that did not come from the burning of the pure oil with which the lamps were trimmed morning and evening. This has its bearing also upon the assembly upon earth to-day. The idea in the candlestick is distinctly ministry. Christ the Living Word is the light; and the ministry of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit produces light, and the same idea is connected with the light of the city. Now, in the ministry of the word there is such a thing as natural talent or ability: but *mere* natural talent will not do. No doubt natural talent is of God, but it does not constitute a gift from the risen and ascended Christ, from whom all gifts to the church come. A gift may be conferred upon one who has natural ability; but natural ability is not the gift. Then, again, the artificial light sets forth scholastic ability, or education. Now, this may be right enough in itself, but it does not constitute a gift from Christ. Many claim that it is necessary to have natural ability, and that you go through the schools before you are allowed to minister; but this is just what is excluded here. Nothing but that which comes directly from the Lord Himself is light in the city, and this is true of that which is growing unto it—the church here on earth. The

glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. That which gives the first distinct idea of the church outside must prevail inside; and the Lamb is the One who gathers up, concentrates and radiates all the glory of God. So in 2 Corinthians iv. 6, the apostle speaks of "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." There is not a thought of the glory of God outside the Lamb, not one! And who is the Lamb? The Man Christ Jesus, who has performed all God's will here on earth, has glorified His blessed name where it was dishonoured, and has gone back into that scene to be the light of the city which is the outcome of His work down here. Shall we have anything in that which professes to be its counterpart on earth that is not for His glory? Christ is always the subject of true Holy Ghost ministry; and in what wonderful power does such ministry fall upon the soul. How light breaks in and leads on! How the word opens up! What indications we get of His mind as to our path even, and on questions that exercise us.

Before touching the last point, we will turn for a moment to the end of chapter xxi., which shews that this city, though in the heavens, is in relationship to the earthly city, and which proves also the millennial character of the scene. "And the nations shall walk in the light of it." (Vers. 24-26.) It is not the nations of them that are saved, for there are none but spared nations there then. The kings bring their glory "unto" it, not "into" it; *they* cannot get there. It is

a heavenly city, and therefore earthly glory and honour cannot be brought into it. But the earthly city exists in the radiancy of the heavenly city; they recognise their dependence upon it, and bring their glory and honour unto it. There is, then, complete community of thought between the nations and their kings in that day. When we read of the destruction of Babylon, in chapter xviii., the nations destroy it, and their kings weep over its destruction. There is no community of thought there. This is scarcely ever found in mere earthly governments, but is so much desired that one of the kings of France said, on a certain occasion, "I would rather be king of the French than of France;" as though he said, give me the hearts of my people. An earthly government may adorn itself with an external religion—it adds a glory to the throne, and kings like a national religion; but the people at times, when they detect the hollowness of it, say, It won't do for us, and seek to destroy it. So the people destroy Babylon, and the kings mourn over her. Come to the millennial day, and there is perfect community of thought between kings and subjects; but it will never be reached until Christ reigns. The fact of nations and kings being mentioned here proves that the whole scene is a millennial one, as in the eternal state the difference of nationalities will be done away. "The tabernacle of God is with *men*"—the only distinction there, is between the *tabernacle of God*, which is the church, and *men*.

We may remark here, also, that it is in this scene alone that we get the fulfilment of that beautiful chain

of blessing spoken of in Hosea ii. 21, 22. There is not one link missing here. "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel." Here Jezreel, which is Israel sown in the land, call upon the corn and wine and oil to sustain them; they call upon the earth for nourishment; the earth calls to the heavens, where the church is; the heavens appeal to God, and He gives, so that His people are supplied.

7.—THE PURE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE—THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We now turn to our last point, chapter xxii. 1-5: "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, and on either side 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 are for the healing of the nations."

Here the throne of God and the Lamb come into prominence as the source of the pure river of the water of life, which sets forth the Holy Spirit in His self-sustaining power, administering the perfect fruition of the tree of life to the happy inhabitants of this city. On either side of the river grows the tree of life, which yields its fruit every month, setting forth the perfection of the administration of the tree of life from

which Adam was shut out ; only this Tree of Life is Christ, and in this city He is ministered in all His varied perfections in the power of the Holy Spirit, without one single thing in those to whom He is thus ministered to hinder or mar it. This is the river the streams whereof make glad the city of God ; it is the river of His pleasures, the river of God. It refreshes the city and fructifies the tree of life with ever ripe fruit for the celestial inhabitants, while the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

The Spirit and the word are constantly linked together in scripture, but are ever maintained in their distinctness. So in our symbols, Light (No. 6) may set forth the ministry of the Christ as the Word ; and this river of life, the Holy Spirit, in whose power alone the preciousness of Christ, as the fruit of constant growth of the tree of life, is thus ministered. But this is what the Spirit of God is seeking to minister to our souls to-day on earth ; and nothing is so sweet as to have the perfections of Christ so ministered to us in the power of the Spirit, as every soul that is allured to the name of Jesus knows. Such a soul may get out of communion at times, and then it will be most miserable ; but in communion, and when the Spirit of God ministers Christ, he has more joy than when the worldling's corn and wine are increased. We do not know enough of it, beloved, but where it is known it will be desired. It is in the church, then, that the Spirit of God ministers Christ, which finds in this ministration the counterpart of the blessings that belong to it up there. Dear reader, there is such a

thing as the church of God on earth to-day. Do you know it? It is not all over with it. It is of this that Christ says "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" and every man who has faith discerns it, and acts upon the principles given for its guidance.

But it is not enough to profess to act upon those principles if there is not living faith to make it all a reality to us; without this, it becomes the most vapid boast that was ever made. Is Christ there amongst us? Is the Spirit of God there? And am I allowing anything to rob me of privileges which are mine now! It would be a cause of ceaseless regret, if regret could be in heaven, that I have thus allowed trifles to rob me of what God has given me now as a birthright. God does not mock us, beloved, and faith gives evidence of things unseen—substantiates things hoped for. We say of the gospel that God does not mock the sinner, and for a stronger reason He does not mock His people. His desire is to minister Christ to our souls in the power of the Holy Spirit.

"And there shall be no more curse, and the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it." We have had lately a monstrosity taught that to be justified before the throne of God judicially is the very highest standing that we, as sinners, can have. Now, apart from an analysis of the scripture upon which this is based (Rom. v. 2), we have here a much higher blessing. Quite true, that the scripture cited gives no warrant for it but, as is always the case, overthrows it. It has been truly noted as a characteristic of the divine word, that you have only to get hold of the right understanding

of the scripture upon which an error is based to overthrow the error completely. Now what is the throne of God the source of here? Not of the curse, nor of that which relates to it, but of pure blessing, "The pure river of the water of life." God has set the curse aside, and has established an ever-flowing stream of blessing. And we shall find, too, that God's throne is normally a throne of blessing. It was in creation a source of creatorial blessing, for then the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth. Then when Adam was created, he was placed in the midst of every creature blessing in the garden. There was the most perfect provision for the creature of God's hands, even to the bringing a helpmeet for him, a type of Christ and the church; and the enjoyment of intercourse between himself and God, who talked with him in the garden in the cool of the day, crowned all. It was thus, beloved, *blessing* that originally flowed from the throne of the God of the creation.

But no sooner was man thus blessed than he fell, and not until the fall was the aspect of the throne of God changed towards him. Man's sin changed the source of blessing into a throne of judgment, because God cannot alter His nature, and the creature had fallen. This went on until God's Son appeared, and as a man, vindicated God's righteousness on behalf of man, and then immediately the throne becomes the throne of *grace*. And though judgment still at times proceeds thence to the sinner, yet to every soul that knows what it is to be justified, that throne is a throne

of grace. We *stand in grace* according to Romans v. 2. We are thus in relation to that throne as a throne of grace, even while here on earth; and the apostle constantly wishes grace, mercy, and peace to those to whom he writes—streams that ever flow from the throne, through Jesus Christ.

Revelation xx. 11 shews that the great white throne is yet to be set; but before that day, the final day of judgment, we see in this city the throne resuming its normal aspect towards the creature. The blessing *was* dammed up for a while by reason of sin, but *now* the grace of God has risen triumphantly over all the barriers that devils and man had raised against it: *then* all will have been swept away, and out of the throne proceeds a pure river of water of life clear as crystal. This river is for those who have not only been justified before the throne, but who are also the inhabitants of this heavenly city. It is the heavenly source of that river which Ezekiel saw, the waters of which flowed out from the temple, growing deeper and deeper until it became a river to swim in. This sets forth the fructifying river of the Spirit of God, which flows then over all the earth. But the marshes thereof are left to salt, shewing that even in the millennial earth there will be those who only “yield feigned obedience.”

“And his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.” (Ver. 4.) Three exceedingly blessed things are here said as to His servants to whom this book is sent, namely:—

1. "His servants shall serve him." Not, as now, imperfectly, but perfectly, and as they would. Here our service is hindered on every hand—physical disability, imperfection in apprehending His will, and an imperfect fulfilment even of what is apprehended. There, the will and the power, as the apprehension, will be perfect, and no hindering power outside. "His servants shall serve him."

2. "And they shall see his face." We serve Him here at times without the sense of His face being upon us. It is dreary work then. There no cloud shall ever hide that blessed face from us. He dwells in the city, and at all times beams upon its inhabitants; nothing without or within to tend to hide that face radiant with all the glory of God, once so marred more than any man's. His servants shall "see his face."

3. "And his name shall be upon their foreheads." Often they do down here that which no one knows to be done in the name of the Lord; not so there, for His name will be in their foreheads. Would it were more true here that His name were known more openly as the motive of our actions. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." If you give alms, or seek to cheer the weary, let it be known that it is in the name of the Lord Jesus; do not be taken merely for a philanthropist, beloved, but act as a Christian in His name. "His name shall be in their foreheads."

May the Lord give more fully to His servants here, that all their service may be done with the beam of His countenance upon them, and in such a way

that His name may be glorified. May He bless to the hearts of His people the wonderful truths contained in these symbols, and which He would write in living letters upon living hearts, by His living Spirit.

Thus it is clear that there is another thing dear to God's heart beside the ministry of the gospel upon earth to-day, and that is the ministry of the church. One would like to ask every saint upon earth, Do you know what the church is? May the Lord give us to know what His thoughts about the church are, and to act according to them for the glory of His name!

G. J. S.

