

# THE NEW JERUSALEM:

Being a Review of  
a Paper so entitled.

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THE system of the writer has at least the merit of being clearly presented to us.

“ Nothing can be more flagrantly inconsistent than to assert that all the prophecies concerning Israel in the Old Testament are to be understood literally, and at the same time to teach that this chapter must be explained away and spiritualized.” We are to understand the contents of Revelation xxi., xxii., literally. To interpret them as spiritual things communicated to us in figure is to explain away.

Is this, then, the principle on which the book of the Revelation is to be understood? or is it possible to deny that the general scope of it is symbolic? Where, then, are we to begin to take it literally? If it be supposed that what is addressed to or spoken of the church must be literal, the writer himself maintains the contrary. For, in speaking of chapters ii., iii., he says, “ Every figure in these Epistles to the seven churches is of a Jewish and Old Testament cast and character.” There are, then, figures in the book; and when the churches, to whom as a whole it is addressed, are specifically the matter in hand, every figure is of Jewish and Old Testament cast and character. There is nothing inconsistent then, as to the form in which the truth is communicated, if the church be still the subject matter in chapters xxi., xxii., although it be cast

in Jewish figures. On the contrary, I think it will be found that nothing could be "more beautifully in harmony with what scripture would lead us to expect." Nor need the most earnest advocate of the literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy for the Jews fear that this will be touched, save to confirm it, by the use of the realities of their coming earthly glory, as figures of a heavenly glory beyond and above theirs.

I will now ask any simple Christian to read again the description of the glorious city in Revelation xxi., xxii., and tell me if it conveys to his mind the idea of what is material; and, if he is still in doubt, to hear what materialism involves the writer in. "As to its shape and form, we cannot pretend to any degree of certainty, but, from the description, it would seem to be material, to be in the form of a lofty pyramid, of which the height to the top-stone, etc. The top-stone, the chief corner-stone, will crown the pyramidal city, and forming thus the centre in which all its lines shall meet, will with exquisite suitability, form the material representation and glorious monument of the exalted living stone." A material inhabited city in the shape of a pyramid! And this is Revelation xxi. "in its natural sense"! But verse 16 will settle this point for a mind subject to scripture. "The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal": the city is presented as a *cube*. What could be more evidently symbol, whatever the thing symbolized? For this we must take the scripture before us, and see if it will not be its own interpreter.

But, first, the structure of this part of the prophecy calls for attention, as evidently forming an important feature in the interpretation of it. What is the reason of the break at the end of verse 8? If there be none, and the course of the prophecy be simply continuous, why is it said at this point, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues"? Has not such introduction of angel messengers been previously marked in the book, and generally connected with some change, or fresh beginning made in the communications of it? (See chaps. v. 2; vii. 1, 2; viii. 2, 3; x. 1; xiv.; xv. 1; xvii. 1; xviii. 1; xx. 1.) Is there nothing to arrest the careful reader *here*?—no break or change indicated? Why, too, one of *these particular* angels, and the similarity of the circumstances under which John was shown the mystery of the woman and the beast that carried her, in chapter xvii.? Are not these things significant at least, and likely to bear on the right understanding of the passage?

The historic sequence of the first eight verses of this chapter, with the events described in chapter xx., may be assumed as unquestioned. The "great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them," introduces naturally "a new heaven and a new earth (chap. xxi.), for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." It is the eternal state, the distinguishing characteristics of which are given us in these verses. Let us weigh them well. And first and most marked of all as to God Himself.

We know something of the immensity involved in *the way* in which God is revealed and known. This forms, and contains in itself, the blessing of His people in every age. God speaks of it to Moses: "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. vi. 3). This was reserved as the order of Israel's blessing.

Full and rich as were the resources of faith in these early days—found in God, revealed as Almighty, and Jehovah in unchanging faithfulness—it was not enough for Him, in the full knowledge of, and nearness to, Himself into which He would bring His people. Even "I am that I am" was involved in inexplicable mystery that none could fathom, till He came who alone could tell it out—the Word that was with God, that was God. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." It was now the only-begotten Son telling out all that was in the bosom of the Father, to bring us into relationship with Him as His children. And when He had finished the work by which God was perfectly glorified in His own nature, and as to sin, He could say, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God," and send down the Holy Ghost to be the power in our hearts of a relationship so intimate and blessed. Again, the name involves the blessing, and "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" contains in it all the richest possible, as it is ours thus to know Him for ever.

But not so does the Revelation give Him to us ; for Christianity, *as such*, is not the subject of it, nor the revelation of God that forms it. It is the Son of man as judge first : and the time was come that judgment should begin at the house of God, chapters ii. iii. Then we have, in chapter iv., the glory of God in creatorship and providence ; chapter v. bringing out the title of the Lamb to the inheritance on the ground of redemption ; then the judgments that put Him in possession of it, till He comes Himself to take possession in chapter xix. This gives its character to the revelation of God in the millennium, and the blessing of that glorious era. It is the direct government of the throne, the Lamb reigning in manifested glory. So Revelation v., where His title is celebrated in heavenly praise, before the hour of actual triumph is looked at as come : “ Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.” So again, when in chapter vii. 9-17, we are carried on to the scenes of the millennial joy : “ 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 tabernacle over them . . . the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,” etc. See also chapters xiv. 1-5 ; xix. 6-9. Everywhere it is God and the Lamb, that marks the blessing of that day. And “ He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet : the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Accordingly the destruction of death, when the resurrection of judgment has made the separation

of body and spirit no longer the existing state of anyone, is given us in Revelation xx. 14.

But now what follows in the passage I have referred to (1 Cor. xv. 24-28), for the expressed order in which these closing events of time take place? "Then cometh the end, when he delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power . . . 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.*" The dispensation of the fullness of times had come: all things in heaven and earth had been headed up in the once despised Nazarene, everything laid low at His feet. But what is it for? That He should give up the universal sovereignty as man. The Son also Himself became subject unto Him that put all things under Him, in order that God should be all in all.

Exactly in accordance with this, is the description of the eternal state given us in the opening verses of our chapter; God is revealed as all in all. "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.*" This is the sum of eternal blessing. What for us could go beyond God thus known, and dwelling with His people? Is it not the very point to which we are already brought by faith, in the Epistle to the Romans, as the climax of our joy? See chapter v. 1-10; and then verse 11, "Not only so, but we also joy in *God* through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we

have now received the reconciliation.” So also in 2 Corinthians v. 17, 18, it is similarly realized as the fruit of the new creation ground on which we are brought in Christ—“Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us *to himself* by Jesus Christ.” This, then, is the brightest distinguishing feature of the new heavens and the new earth, when “the former things are passed away, and he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new.” God is all in all.

But, secondly, and hardly less marked as to man’s state, is the fact, that all the distinctions that came in by sin in time and upon the earth are lost. We hear no more of nations. In the new creation, and therefore already to faith, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all” (Col. iii. 10, 11).

One distinction alone remains, “the tabernacle of God is with men.” But this was not the fruit of sin in the flesh in time, but of the counsels of God before the world was. It is the church: not (as it is found only in Paul’s Epistles) the body of Christ, but in a twofold relationship; to Christ as the bride adorned for her husband; and to God, as His tabernacle, the eternal dwelling-place of His glory. Both are found in Ephesians: the first in connection with Christ’s love that is preparing it for presentation to Himself in glory—all that He can delight in (chap. v. 25–27); and the second in chapter ii. 21, 22, where all the



building fitly framed together is growing unto a holy temple in the Lord. Such is the result reached for the church as to both relationships in Revelation xxi. The Kingdom was prepared for the blessed heirs of it, "from the foundation of the world," and when set up will last as long as time lasts (see Ps. lxxxix. 4, 27-37); but the church belongs to eternity, according as He has chosen us in Him *before* the foundation of the world. I shall have to refer again to the subject of the giving up of the Kingdom, but now pass on to other characteristics of the eternal state.

"There was no more sea" (ver. 1), no part of the new creation that is not brought into order and blessing.

"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" (v. 4). God rests at last, when there was fully come the declared and precious object of the manifestation of the Son; "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It was clean gone now. No trail of the serpent defiled the new creation. God had gone to the source of all that brought in sorrow, and swept it away in the judgment of the cross. The former things were passed away. The God, who had had to drive out the man and woman in tears from the Eden He had made for unfallen creatures, is able to meet us on the threshold of a new heaven and a new earth as the wiper away of all tears from our eyes.

"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. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." What words could more solemnly close the eventful history of time, wherein God had used the proved ruin of man, to bring out to His own infinite glory what He Himself is, to be the fountain of eternal flowings of refreshment for His people : " I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life freely." Already we are at the source. He could say, who came to make Him known, " the water that I shall give shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Here is the full realization of it in eternity.

" He that overcometh shall inherit *these* things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son " (ver. 7). Such is the close of the conflict, and such the position and portion of the overcomer in God's own presence and blessing. Then one last word that fixes in terrible contrast the eternal and unalterable doom of the lost that have " their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Here the veil of the future, lifted by revelation, drops ; as well it may. The historic sequence of events has been opened out prophetically to its term. The waves of succeeding ages break no longer on the shores of time. This is eternity, and there beyond the utmost bound of the everlasting hills faith knows its portion.

Yet once again the veil is lifted, and a scene of great glory is opened to us. Some of the elements of it are such as have been already before us in the description of the eternal state, yet not without

sufficient to distinguish it as we shall see—with even points of contrast. If it be so, what is the glory that is portrayed from verse 9 to chapter xxii. 5? We must look at it a little in detail, for we are told that here “there is an absence of all the church’s distinctive characteristics.”

“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 shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain” (ver. 9). Now, surely it is not unworthy of notice that at this point the position of John changes. It is not often that it is so ordered in the course of the communications made to him, yet never, we may safely say, without design and fitness; though whether we are able to discern it is another thing. But is an interpretation of the passage likely to be the true one that makes nothing of such a change? Nay, that has for its principle that there is none, but that in orderly connection of the parts, the scene is one, in chapters xxi. 1–xxii. 5. So that John is carried away in spirit to a great and high mountain at verses 9, 10, to be shown what he has already seen and described from verse 1–8. This is the system of the paper. “Thus we see the millennial city and earth are at an end *before* this city descends, which is confirmed by the word that there shall be no more death. . . . So also there shall be no sun, and yet no night.” But I turn to the Word, for the light we want, which is surely not lacking in it.

The introduction seems to carry us back to

chapter xvii. There is certainly a striking parallel in the way John was shown the very different scenes before him there: "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters. . . . So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness." Then it was to see the unholy alliance of the apostate church with the world, in the last form the Gentile dominion assumes, that is, the revived Roman Empire. How suited the wilderness, from which John looks out on the moral chaos, where no trait of the life of Christ was found to be fruit for God.

Yet was there never to be a true connection of the church with the world? Absolutely none with the world, *as it is*, out of which Christ is rejected: "They are not of the world, *even as I am not of the world.*" But what, when the kingdom of this world becomes the Lord's, and He sits on the throne of His glory? We shall reign with Him. Scripture is perfectly clear as to this. It tells us, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Again, "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" (Rev. ii. 21).

Much of the confusion of the paper is to be traced to the mistaken thought of limiting the truths of the church to that which is especially revealed of it through Paul, that is, its unity as the body of Christ. Yet even there, as we have seen, it is also the temple of God. But besides

what the church is corporately, there are, first and highest of all, the relationships in which those who compose it stand individually with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, as Ephesians i. unfolds them to us. It is full association with Him in all that He has entered into as man with His Father and God. Hence His place always gives us ours. If hidden now, our life is hid with Him in God ; if about to be manifested, then shall we also be manifested with Him in glory. In fact, He comes " to be glorified *in* his saints, and to be admired *in* all them that believe " ; in bright contrast to the day when He came alone, and men " saw no beauty in him that they should desire him." As the prism catches the ray that falls upon it, and, breaking it up into its several colours, reflects it thus in its varied beauty and perfection ; so will the church be to Christ in the coming day of manifested glory.

This is what is given us in the description before us ; not so much the home of the Father and the Son, the home of our hearts even now in a love that goes beyond the glory, because the glory can be displayed, but the love never ; but the displayed glory of the Kingdom, and the church's necessary and blessed association with Christ in it, the heavenly Eve of the last Adam, heir and sharer with Him of it all. It is especially the heavenly part of the glory, where the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (Matt. xiii. 43). But then is seen Church and State in true connection with one another, when it is no longer Satan's skill in counterfeit, but the fulfilment of the purpose of God for the glory of His Christ.

We see thus the reason of the link between chapters xvii. and xxi. 9 to xxii. 5, if only to bring out the contrast of the things that are depicted. And do we not enter in some little measure into the wisdom and preciousness of the grace that does not give us the glorious espousal of the church, as in chapter xix., until the overthrow in judgment of that which had held the place and profession of the bride in the awful Satanic counterfeit? nor finally close the Revelation without bringing out her true and recognized place in the Kingdom, when the time had come for it, according to God? What more in keeping too, than that one of the angels of the vials by which judgment was executed, should be chosen to show John the full positive result in glory and blessing?

May I ask here what could be the suitability of one of the *vial* angels being thus introduced, according to the scheme of interpretation (if so it can be called) that I am examining? According to the paper this is eternity; and therefore the thousand years of the Kingdom have intervened between the pouring out of the vials of wrath, and the glory here set out before John. Why such a link taken up with events of time so long past?

But let us look at the details presented to us. John is summoned to behold the bride, the Lamb's wife. Now this is not the first mention of her, in what I conceive to be the order of the prophecy. She has been already introduced as such in chapter xix., in the day of her public espousal in glory. And this our author fully recognizes. The wife who had made herself ready in chapter xix.,

“ the Lamb’s wife, so loved, betrothed, and married, we see in her eternal home ” in chapter xxi. This is important. Let us look at chapter xix., for if the bride of the Lamb be Israel in chapter xxi., it must be Israel in chapter xix. Now I maintain that the terms of the description in the latter preclude the possibility of it. Let me ask, Is the scene heavenly or earthly ? Verse 1 settles it. “ After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven.” It is heavenly—not the new heavens and the new earth, where all is heavenly—but heaven, in contrast with the earth that had just been the scene of the judgment of the great corrupting whore, whose smoke rose up for ever and ever. Heaven is the scene of the joy and worship that attend the marriage of the Lamb, before it opens in verse 11, to give Him forth in the last stroke of judgment, that puts Him in possession of the Kingdom. Who is owned as the wife that has made herself ready ? The system of the paper makes it Israel in resurrection, saved, not as individuals, but as a nation. I do not stop here to notice this extraordinary misapplication of Romans xi. But the remnant of Judah had never yet looked on Him whom they had pierced, to say nothing of the ten tribes needed to make up all Israel as a nation, who are only brought in after Judah is first settled in peace with Messiah in the land.

The heavenly glory of the nuptials settles in itself who is the subject of them. It is the church thus publicly owned in suited heavenly glory, when judgment had first set aside on earth that which had falsely borne His name, and assumed

her place. And she is owned according to the Lamb's delight in her. In chapter xxi. characteristics are added suited to the place she is called to take with Him in the Kingdom; as well as of her own personal condition, which being perfect in glory is of course eternal. And so John saw "that city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (ver. 10). It is the church as the heavenly seat of the administration of the Kingdom (chap. xxii. 4), as Jerusalem is the earthly.

Such is, I submit, the only consistent interpretation of the symbol. Every figure is still "of Jewish and Old Testament cast and character"; but the question is, What is the thing thus figured? Now, let me ask my reader, if the church is destined for this place of rule and administration under Christ in the Kingdom, what more expressive as a symbol than Jerusalem, the well-known seat of royalty and centre of government on earth?—a symbol, not of its highest relationships, and of that which is therefore nearest to our hearts (though it flows from them), but of its place and connection with Christ in the Kingdom.

"Holy," as to its state, other distinctions follow: it "descends out of heaven," its source stamping its character, "from God." It might have been from God, and earthly. It might have been heavenly and angelic. It was neither. It descended out of heaven from God.\* "And is set up—settles in the new earth among the

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\* Will it be believed that this "reminds" the writer of the truth that Israel's calling "was . . . not heavenly, like ours, but earthly—eternally earthly"? Could words describe anything more completely heavenly?



nations," so the writer says. But where is there a trace of it in the passage? Does descending out of heaven involve settling on the earth? Take a parallel case in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15, 16: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven." Must we adopt the conclusion (of current theology indeed) that He comes to the earth? We know that He does not; but, caught up with the dead in Christ first raised, together we meet the Lord in the air—"a glorious apparition *in the clouds*" (if the writer likes), "as some have"—not so strangely after all—"imagined," even before the day of the millennial Jerusalem.

But we must proceed with the details. "Having the glory of God" (ver. 11). Wonderful privilege! Well may it arrest us, as we ask, To whom belongs this intimate connection with the divine glory? Has not divine grace made it already the Christian's in hope? "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 2). We "reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed in us." He has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. The earnest expectation of the creature waits for our manifestation in His glorious image as the sons of God. But the church is set to be the display of it morally now as the epistle of Christ in the world (2 Cor. iii.). And the power for this is given us in the last verse of that chapter: "Beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." The glory of God shines before us in the face of Jesus, and we gaze on it

in peace ; for every ray of it brings into our souls the sweet witness of the perfection of His work that has set us thus in presence of the glory, and as we gaze we become like Him.

This will be found to come out further in the symbols before us ; “ Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” The word for “ light ” is more fully “ shining ” (Φωστήρ), only used before in the New Testament in Philippians ii. 15. “ Her shining ” is like jasper. The force of this is at once seen by the only previous use of jasper in this book. He that sat upon the throne (chap. iv. 3) “ was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone ” : it is the symbol of the glory of God. The same thing is already beautifully expressed for faith, in 2 Corinthians iv. 6, “ *God hath shined in our hearts for the shining forth* (Φωτισμόν) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” So again, in the passage before referred to, where the very word is found (Phil. ii. 15), we are set to be the display of the glory in its moral characteristics in the world, “ blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights (Φωστῆρες) in the world ” ; for this is just what Christ was. The only difference is that now we possess the treasure in an earthen vessel, that too often obscures the manifestation of it. But in the new Jerusalem the vessel is suited to the glory it contains, and there is the perfect shining of it “ like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”

All this is of no account with the writer, who says, as he passes over it, "the next feature that bears on this inquiry is the great high wall." The glory of God is not a feature of any significance. Let the simple Christian judge, who has no theory of interpretation to maintain.

"And had a wall great and high" (ver. 12). Let us see how this is treated: "There was ever in Israel one characteristic which distinguished its constitution from that of the church, namely, the wall of partition, by which its exclusive right to God's presence and blessing was asserted against the nations round about." Now if we look at Ephesians ii., where the middle wall of partition is spoken of, it is the symbol of the enmity between Israel and God, as much as between them and the nations—"even the law of commandments contained in ordinances": so little is the writer's account of it the truth. This was abolished in the death of Christ. But it is well to note how easily the writer himself abandons his theory of the material. For it could not be seriously maintained that this is the ordinary purpose and meaning of the wall of a material city. It is its defence and security; nor otherwise does verse 27 consistently interpret it. The heavenly city is enclosed and shut in thus, against all that is unsuited to the glory of God, of which it is the dwelling-place. And the suited material of the building of the wall of it was jasper (ver. 18), that which symbolized the glory. A "middle wall of partition" has, indeed, no place in the constitution of the church. But is there nothing that answers to the wall of the heavenly city, in

the responsibility of the church as the house of God on earth, to maintain the holiness and truth that alone consist with His presence? And if it is just in the breaking down of this that it has utterly failed, how blessed to see that no thought of God shall fail of its full accomplishment. The glory of God will itself maintain what is suited to it, and to His dwelling-place, in the day of glory.

But what of the angels at the gates (ver. 12)? The paper is silent, for, according to the system of it, it would be hard to account for their place. But "to angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak"; and this is just the subject before us. To whom, then? Now this is given us in the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on the gates of the city. For every figure is still of Jewish and Old Testament cast and character, and the cast of this is taken from Ezekiel's prediction of Jerusalem on the earth. But here it is an expressive symbol of what is deeper. The gate is the place where rule is administered in the East. The order of government on earth was ever connected with Israel and its twelve tribes, as the centre of it. But now that which is thus the fitting symbol of rule and government, is found connected with the heavenly city, in the names of the tribes inscribed on the gates. To us, the heavenly saints, the church under Christ, is entrusted the judicial administration of "the world to come." "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi. 2.) "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 . . . even as I received of my Father " (Rev. ii. 26, 27). " I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them " (Rev. xx. 4).

" All doubt as to its being the special home of Israel must now be removed, for not only the nation, but its tribes, are all found there, each with its own special portion." Where is there anything of this in the passage? There is not a word of the *nation*, nor of the *special portion* of the tribes. There are the names of the tribes; fulfilling a most leading part, as we have seen, in the symbolic representation of the church's ascertained place in the Kingdom. It is its polity that is described, in its special millennial place. The inhabitants come afterwards as a distinct thing.

In full consistency is the connection of the twelve apostles with the foundations. " And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb " (ver. 14). Certainly they were not the foundations of the relationship in which Israel has stood, or will stand, with God. That they were to have a special place of privilege in the administration of the Kingdom we know from Matthew xix. 28. " Ye which have followed me, 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." Yet was the church, as the habitation of God, builded upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Their promised place in the Kingdom would not in any way

interfere with their being of the body of Christ when it was formed at Pentecost, for the church was also to have intimate connection with the Kingdom, as we have seen. Yet to Paul was specially assigned the revelation of that higher heavenly relationship, but in no wise shutting him out of part in the earthly (see 1 Cor. iv. 8).

Thus all is consistent. Divine distinctions and order were to be observed as fully in the introduction of the twelve here, as in the omission of Paul. To be of the body of Christ was much beyond any special place of rule in the Kingdom reserved for any; but such was not here the subject.

I would note here that Matthew xix. 28 is quoted for the system of the paper, which is that Revelation xxi., xxii. is, as a connected whole, the eternal state. But is "the regeneration" equal in force to "the new heavens and the new earth"? And does the Son of man sit on the throne of His glory eternally? 1 Corinthians xv. tells us expressly that He delivers up the kingdom to God.

There are yet other points which demand our attention. "The twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl" (ver. 21). That which first meets the eye as a walled city is approached, is its gate. Thus at every approach there shines out amid the surrounding wall of the divine glory, the pearl—the chosen symbol of what the church was to Christ, of His own special delight in it as He saw it in eternity, in His own thoughts about it—"who, when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all

that he had, and bought it." Every several gate showed out this.

"And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass" (ver. 18). The gold of divine righteousness, the glass of transparent purity, are but the symbols in glory, of what the new man is already created in, "which *after God* is created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 24). "And the street of the city" was of the same material (ver. 21). What rest it will be to walk where there is nothing ever again to defile! In danger of defilement now at every step, there the very street we walk on will answer perfectly to what we are, and both to what God is.

"And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (ver. 22). True to the characteristic privileges of the Christian, as is every detail, all that marked the distance of Israel's relationships is unknown. The millennial Jerusalem on earth will have its temple, but not so the heavenly city. The whole city will be a sanctuary. The unveiled presence of God is there, where we have been brought even now by faith.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light (or lamp\*) thereof" (ver. 23). It is the light that has made all so bright for our hearts already, "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God." It is the glory of God in the face of Jesus—God ever to be known, in Him in whom

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\* See chapter xxii. 5., where it is translated "candle."

He was manifested in humiliation, the man Christ Jesus—"the Lamb is the Lamp thereof." And we can gaze undazzled upon the brightness of glory, because we see it in the face of Him "who loved us, and has washed us from our sins in his own blood." And so we gaze already by faith, "and are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

"And the nations shall walk in the light of it" (ver. 24). "Of them that are saved," as is well known, has no authority; and it is "by," or "by means of," rather than "in," as in the received text. The world should have been able to walk by the light of the church now. "Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. v. 14-16). See also 2 Cor. iii. 3-5; Phil. ii. 15, 16). In a sense it is so, in spite of all the church's failure, for apart from the revelation of God in Christ possessed by it there is nothing but darkness in the world. But when the Lamb is the Lamp, the faithful and true Witness if all else has failed, the church will fulfil its function to the nations according to the mind of God, become in glory the *perfect* vessel of the display of the light by which they walk.

"And the kings of the earth do bring their honour and glory to (*εἰς*, not *ἐν*) it, owning it in its due place as the heavenly metropolis of the throne of God and of the Lamb—so verse 26.

"And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there" (ver. 25). The light of an endless and unclouded day is the sure and sufficient protection of the entrance to the city, even as it is given us already as the



Christian's armour—"the armour of light" (Rom. xiii. 12). For "that which doth make manifest is light." It detects and exposes all that is unsuited to itself, and thus guards the avenues of the heart against everything incompatible with the enjoyment of His presence who is light—where we have been set. Hence verse 27, "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."

Here, for the first time, we have the thought of inhabitants of the city. Up to this it has been the church corporate, in its relation to the millennial earth, expressed by the symbol of a city.

The river of the water of life has its source there from the throne of God and the Lamb (chap. xxii. 1), the figure being still unquestionably borrowed from the future Jerusalem on earth. But, as we have seen in each fresh characteristic given us of the heavenly city, the thing symbolized in glory has been already made true by the Holy Ghost to faith in the Christian. So here—"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water: but this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 37-39). The Holy Ghost come from the glory where Jesus is, and dwelling in us, brings into our hearts in the knowledge of Him, more than all the joy of the millennial feast of tabernacles, and makes us channels

(though much more, being in communion with the source ; it is “ out of his *belly* shall flow ”) of the living waters now.

In the glory of the heavenly city, there is also found another church link, in the symbol of that which gives special character to the church’s testimony. The tree of life is there (ver. 2), already given in promise to the overcomers in the epistle to the church at Ephesus—“ To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God ” ; and here there is not only unhindered access to and enjoyment of it for ourselves for ever, but “ the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” The church will be still in millennial glory, the witness of grace to the nations, in marked contrast with millennial Jerusalem, which preserves its character too, as connected with, and the earthly centre of, God’s ways in government —“ the nation and kingdom that shall not serve thee shall perish ” (Isa. lx. 12).

“ And there shall be no more curse ” (ver. 3). Here the Jerusalem of that day, that has supplied us with many a figure of a glory beyond hers or Israel’s, gives us a contrast, for there the curse still lingers, if only upon the sinner—“ the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed ” (Isa. lxxv. 20). “ But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him.” How sweet the assurance for any who have sought to serve Him now ever so feebly, and who know the grace that makes so much of the least done truly to Him ! It shall be theirs to serve Him without hindrance or ceasing for ever.

“ And they shall see his face ” (ver. 4). “ For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face ; now I know in part, then shall I know as also I am known.” Thus the Lord meets the longing He has Himself created in our hearts, as He knew nothing else could meet it. We shall reign, and that for ever, for the throne never passes from Him as it did from one to another before Him, though He gives it up as man to take it as God. But, more blessed still, a witness of all that is deeper and more intimate in our association with Him, is preserved, in simple words, but how full for hearts that know Him—“ they shall see his face.”

“ And his name shall be in their foreheads.” Surely there ought to be the moral imprint of Christ, left by the glory in which we behold Him, on our hearts and lives now ; but how marred, how dimly seen, is His image in any of us—bearing His name too often to His dishonour. Then we shall bear it before every eye, no more to fail to represent or glorify Him in anything.

“ 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 (not as more feebly ‘ giveth them light ’), and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

This leads me to notice the foundation of the argument of the paper I am commenting on, namely, “ that Israel is the elect nation of God to hold an eternal place before Him, not only in this world, but also in the new.”

Now the texts on which this rests are all from the Old Testament, save one in Romans xi.—

which is to dispel the last lingering doubt of anyone who demurs to the startling doctrine—and Revelation xix., xxi., which have to be proved to have anything to do with them. But I doubt whether this treatment of the subject will commend itself to those who read their Bibles. Of such I would ask if it is in the Old Testament, that the veil is lifted to let in the light of eternity ; where eternal life is only twice mentioned, and the eternal counsels of God are not revealed according to the express statements of the New. See 1 Timothy i. 9, “ Who hath saved us . . . according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility (for that is the word in the original) to light through the gospel.” And Titus i. 2 : “ In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began, but hath in due time manifested his word through preaching, which is committed to me.” (See also Rom. xvi. 25, 26 ; Col. i. 25, 26.)

The New Testament is the revelation of eternity, and sheds the clear light of it on the passing scene of this world. The cross, that is the ground in time and on the earth of the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers, lays also the foundation for the bringing in of that which was before all promise—the eternal purpose of God.

The counsels of God are thus connected with eternity, as the promises made to the fathers are with time. Now the only passage quoted

from the New Testament to prove that these last are eternal is Romans xi. But this scripture brings us down in express terms to the tree of promise on the earth. God had not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Some of the branches had been broken off because of unbelief and branches of a wild olive-tree grafted in to partake of the root and fatness. These are warned that they only stand by faith, and may in their turn be cut off, and the natural branches grafted in again into their own olive-tree. Even so it shall be ; and in this way " all Israel shall be saved," that is, as a nation, instead of a remnant blessed as now according to the election of grace. Thus Isaiah lix. 20, 21, would have its fulfilment : " For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." But if blessing had come to the Gentiles through their fall, how much more through their fullness ? " For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead ? " So then, what Christianity as a professing system had been cut off from on earth, Israel is to be grafted into again.

This, we are told, is eternity, and the proof of Israel's portion " of eternal distinctness," and " in exact correspondence with Revelation xxi." Is the reader at a loss for any trace of such a correspondence ? The author supplies it, by introducing in the bias of his system, a resurrection condition of things wholly foreign to the truth of Romans xi.—" In a risen people, a people raised from the dead, Abraham shall read the fulfilment of the everlasting covenant. And so in resurrection all

Israel shall be saved, not as individuals, but as a nation."

It remains for us to consider what is the force of the Old Testament expressions, that seem to make the duration of Israel's blessing eternal. The Psalm (lxxxix.) I have already referred to must be held to throw important light on the subject; see verses 1-4, 28-37; in which Israel's full future blessing is before us, founded on the mercy and faithfulness of Jehovah, and set up in the king of whom it is said, "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." But how is the duration of the blessing defined? "His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." Again, "As the sun before me; it shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." The use of the expression is the more remarkable, as applied to that which is eternal, according to full New Testament revelation; that is, the throne, which never passes from David's Son, though He gives it up as man to take it as "God all in all." But even when that part of the blessing which is essentially eternal is spoken of, the language used does not go beyond the utmost limit of time—"it shall be established for ever as the moon."

The last verses of Isaiah lxvi. are quoted, as though the new heavens and the new earth spoken of, were identical with the new heavens and new earth of Revelation xxi. 1. It is easily seen that this is not so by the mention of them in the previous chapter (lxv. 17-25), which describes the course of government against the ungodly and

transgressors. It is the great moral change that takes place in the regeneration, when "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God," that is spoken of—not the heavens and the earth of the new creation.

Two passages remain to be noticed as supposed to "bear upon this study." The first is Galatians iv. 26, of which it is said, "This has been supposed to confirm the view that Revelation xxi. describes the church." We shall see whether it does or not. "But examine the passage with its context," and see if it says anything like what the writer makes it say—"To Israel have been committed the oracles of God, and through Israel, that is the inspired Jews whom God employed to write and preach the glad tidings, have the Gentiles received the grace of life: Israel is therefore the mother of us [all]." This is the result of our author's reasoning, that "our mother must be something of the past," instead of examining the passage with its context, in which we find the apostle explains himself, by quoting Isaiah liv. 1. This speaks of what Jerusalem *is yet to be* by grace, as free, in contrast with its condition under law. In that coming day of its millennial liberty and joy, Jerusalem will look back and own us Christians, the children of promise, as Isaac was (ver. 28), as her children; and that thus the period of her apparent desolateness was really fruitful to her in the richest way. Only that, while the apostle speaks thus, he adds a word which just connects us with even a higher thing than Jerusalem emancipated; namely, "Jerusalem, which is *above*, is free."

There is a heavenly Jerusalem as well as a restored earthly one. Many a passage of Old Testament scripture gives us the earthly; Revelation xxi., xxii., gives the heavenly, and in this the Christian has his portion, "for our citizenship (*πολίτευμα*) is in heaven."

"Another passage quoted against this interpretation," according to the author, is Hebrews xii. 22, though he does not say where he finds the argument, that "ye are come to the new Jerusalem," means, that we *are* the new Jerusalem! I am glad to be able to accept in the main what he says of it, that it is "an enumeration of the glorious circle of the saints' inheritance." It is the circle of things we are connected with by grace, through a glorified Christ, in contrast with a living Messiah on earth. The passage says nothing as to "the nature of the connection," and therefore cannot be taken in proof of the writer's interpretation any more than of that which is opposed to it. Still I do not think the order is without significance, or that there is wanting in it what confirms the truth, as we have seen it, of Revelation xxi., xxii.

For is there not an ascending and descending scale of glory here, so to speak? The eye rests first on "Mount Sion" on earth, the seat of the nations' establishment in grace under the King (see for the type 1 Chron. xv., xvi.; 2 Chron. v. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 67-72). Then the eye lifts, and sees what is connected with the centre of earthly blessing, but yet is above it—"the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Then, as more immediately connected with the



divine centre of all—" an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly." But in the innermost circle round the throne, the church, in its own proper character as " the church of the first-born which are enrolled in heaven." Then, having risen up " to God the judge of all," we come down next " to the spirits of just men made perfect," the Old Testament saints, in their ordered place and blessing ; " and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant," which is thus looked at, in connection with the people to whom it belongs ; " and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel," inasmuch as it lays the ground for the whole blessing in both its heavenly and earthly parts, instead of crying for judgment. Thus, if place was found in this circle of glory for the church's connection with the Kingdom, as Mount Sion naturally leads on to it, we have it in its own essentially heavenly character and calling as well.

The Lord give us a deeper understanding of the things so freely and richly unfolded to us in His Word, and, above all, the abiding enjoyment of them as the things in which we live in communion with Him.

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