

## THE UNVEILING.

(BRIEF NOTES OF PRESENT READINGS ON THE REVELATION.)

THE contemplation of this book takes us over ground that is not touched in the other New Testament writings. It is called the Apocalypse—literally, the unveiling—of Jesus Christ, and it was given to John for a set purpose, namely, “to shew unto his servants things that must shortly come to pass.” The revelation is made known by “signs”—He “sent and *signified* it to his servant [bondslave] John,” and John bare witness of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ: then what follows is blessing.

We see the complete failure of all that has been set up here; ruin and failure is all around us, and with no outward intervention of Christ with regard to it. He does not publicly set His face against what is apostate in the church to-day, neither does He commit Himself in any way to what may appear good in it. But this book shews us the solution of every moral question; every moral issue raised in the Book of Genesis is disentangled here in the Revelation. There is the complete and final solution of the question of good and evil. Prophecy gives us the outline of God’s ways, and it is of all importance that we should understand His ways, otherwise though we may have a certain know-

ledge of His purpose and counsels—which is properly Christianity—we shall not be well balanced in our own ways. Our souls get balance in seeing the great principles of God's dealings with men: they appeal to our consciences. At the same time we should rightly view this book not merely as a book of judgments, but as a book of triumphs, and final triumphs, the great victory of good over evil. The more we are established in the truth of God's purpose for us in Christ, the better shall we be able to appreciate the place of the elders here; they sit unmoved through all the judgments which come upon the earth, but that is because they are in the full knowledge of the love of God as expressed in His counsels.

John's writings, both the gospel and the Revelation, are largely based on "signs"; he communicates the truth by sign-teaching: signs concern themselves not with what *is*, but with what is about to be; they bring in the light of the future; so we look not at the literal words employed, but we see human language and human symbols taken up to convey divine truths. We need not look for the truth of the symbol outside scripture.

This book does not give us the side of divine privilege, but rather the side of responsibility; but all takes its character from the way "Jesus" is presented; He does not take up the place of Priest, save as regards His outward position, and in so far as priesthood touches responsibility. It is a question all through the book of God and Christ, not of the Father and the Son, so at the

end what comes into view in the holy city is "God and the Lamb." Every title under which God has been pleased to reveal Himself to man is taken up here; He comes out as Elohim, Jehovah and Shaddai, for there is the summing up of all God's ways with regard to men. The testimony of God is concerned with the place of Christ; He has not got His right place to-day, but God will not permit Him to be always refused; He will see to it that the highest place is accorded Him; everything is put into the hands of Christ. There is to be the setting aside of evil for ever, and the establishing of all that is good. In chapter x. Christ is seen as a mighty angel, having one foot on the land and the other on the sea, that is, He lays claim to all, and where He has put down His foot He will never take it up; we are in the light of this by the testimony of God; it is the witness of what will shortly come to pass in a public way.

John himself, as in the Isle of Patmos, was at the mercy of the fourth wild beast, the great Roman beast, yet this very book is the one which will send that beast down to the pit. There is a veil drawn over God's ways to-day, but the Revelation shews us that veil put aside and the solution of all God's ways brought about in Christ. God's dealings with us in the present interval are to bring us into moral accord with His actings, so that when the moment comes for Him to move, we may not be shaken or afraid, but be found sitting unmoved, in the intelligence of what must be the outcome of His perfect administration. This world is about to be displaced by "the king-

dom of the world of our Lord, and of his Christ" (N. Tr.); all the stately religious systems of this world will find their place in the pit; its social order and all that marks it to-day will pass away for ever, but this book is written that our hearts may be detached from this present world-system, and attached to that blessed order of things which God is about to bring to pass in Christ.

The idea of "he that readeth" in verse 3 is that one person reads while the others listen (Neh. viii. 7); but it has a moral significance too, and a blessing attaches to such an one as having digested into his being the principles which are found in this book—has it thus available for others. You have to be governed and ordered by the principles of God's holy judgment of sin, and of His approval of all that is right as seen in Christ; these principles have to first find their place in our own hearts: all that is involved in "reading," and then we find that a special blessing is attached to it. We get the same thought in Psalm lxxxiv. 5, "Blessed is the man . . . in whose heart are the ways": the principles which govern the ascent to Zion are cherished in his heart; he is governed by them and is blessed.

The result of Paul's work is only failure as far as the outward church is concerned; his sun in that way sets in darkness; but John concerns himself with what goes on to the end, with what follows on the night; he brings in the day. He shews us a morning without clouds—the holy city "descending out of heaven from God, having the *glory* of God."

The Revelation is usually divided thus: *Chapter i.*—John's vision. *Chapters ii. and iii.*—the epistles to the churches, which prophetically cover the present period. Then *from chapter iv. onwards* we get the ways of God publicly with men and the earth, which introduce the heavenly city as the vessel of the glory of God, and the final solution of the question of good and evil.

“The time is at hand”—the next move, so to speak, is imminent. There is no time with God: we speak of the death of Christ as having taken place eighteen hundred years ago, but it is not exactly so with God. Time has reference to the surface of this earth, but take us off it and we touch eternity. Eternity and time have no touching point but at and through the death of Christ. We are not looking for events as such, but we are kept in exercise, and so in touch with the mind of God; in that way we are prepared for the next movement from heaven, and we ourselves are unmoved. John himself was “in the Spirit”—he was taken up to a standpoint where he might be uninfluenced and unbiassed by things here. In the days of the Lord on earth you find certain people taken up to a mountain top; that conveys the same idea: God would place us at a point of vantage, where we can be detached from seen things and from time.

God appeals to men's consciences through things which come within the scope of a prophecy, though they do not fulfil it entirely. It was so with Peter on the day of Pentecost; he quotes Joel as warrant for what was then taking place;

but Joel is still awaiting its full answer. The true influence of this book on those who read it, should be to make them really *God-fearing*—not merely Christians, but such as fear God.

*(To be continued.)*



## THE VEIL.

MOST holy place where once the light,  
Hid by the veil intrinse, could shine  
When God unknown, in radiance bright,  
Dwelt in His Majesty divine.

What flesh could bear such glorious rays  
Which spake of brightest glory pure ?  
Repelling in those transient days  
The man who never could endure.

The light was Christ, supernal worth  
Before the eye of God appeared ;  
Partitioned from the sons of earth  
He only then its fragrance shared.

But Jesus dies, uncurtained now  
The veil no longer hides the sight ;  
Our hearts in adoration bow  
And worship in that holy light.

Jesus the Lord of glory dwells  
Above the zenith, wondrous place !  
Empyrean radiance ne'er repels  
As we behold His glorious face.

Our hearts are open, Lord, to Thee,  
No more to this world's god of night ;  
Transformed already, Lord, are we  
Thy present work, in power and might.

London, W.

J. JAY



# THE UNVEILING.

(Continued.)

(REV. I. 4-20.)

**THIS** book shews us the drawing aside of the veil of God's providences; we see God's over-government of the world to day, but He does not step in publicly; neither do we find Christ publicly identifying Himself with any: He takes up an attitude in regard to what is of Himself, but according to its responsibility. The unveiling may become manifestation at any moment; for this book shews us that there is nothing to intervene between the period of the seven churches and the judgments which will fall on the earth.

John was taken up where he could look at things according to God; he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. The Lord took occasion of his banishment and turned it to account to give him this vision and to shew him the end of God's ways with men. It is only as we have learned the truth of the gospel, and the end of flesh in the cross of Christ, that we shall be able to look unmoved on God's judgment of evil, publicly expressed, in these judgments which must fall on the earth. "Unto him that loves us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" would shew that we have accepted the judgment of the cross. Then we know His love as expressed to His church in His death, and He has made us a kingdom of priests to God and His Father; if we are established in all these things, we shall not be moved by the fear of

coming judgment. The judgment of God has been expressed in the cross of Christ, but as yet it has not fallen on the world-system, and we are awaiting the moment of the public solution of the question of good and evil.

Every divine title connected with God's ways is brought before us in this book: we get the Almighty, Jehovah and God, and each title is fully vindicated in connection with those ways. Jesus Christ is brought before us as the Witness, the faithful One—there is in Him the perfect vindication of all God's ways with men; He is the "faithful witness" outside all question of failure on the part of men or the church.

The fact that this vision is signified to his servant John by an angel implies distance; it is in keeping with the sign-character of the book, but though man's failure as to responsibility may bring in distance, yet John recognises the Lord, and claims Him for the whole church as "him that loves us." (Ver. 5.)

The "kingdom of priests" does not present the priesthood as connected with privilege, but rather in relation to responsibility. The imagery is taken up from Exodus: we do not here get the inner side of priesthood either in regard to Christ or the saints.

The Spirit is associated with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in the general salutation (vers. 4 and 5)—"the seven spirits that are before his throne"—all must be in accord with the throne. Then it speaks of Jesus Christ as the "prince of the kings of the earth"—it is the earth that He has taken up, and the time is



coming when the man of the earth (Psa. x. 18) shall not oppress any more, it is in view of *that* day that He is addressed as "prince of the kings of the earth." The imperial kingdom is established in Christ. Nebuchadnezzar says of empire that God gives it to "whom he will" (Dan. iv.), and history has shewn us that the attempt by man to usurp it is futile; it will not abide. Scripture speaks of such a condition as continuing "for a short space." (Chap. xvii. 2.) Christ will be Prince of the kings of the earth in manifestation, but we have the unveiling even now; we bow *in affection* to Him to-day, and there is all the difference between the place of subjection and the link in affection. All this gives great force to John's claiming Him for the whole church, as Him that loves us.

There have been four great empires upon earth: the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman; there is only room for one at a time, for empire properly means universal dominion. Now that belongs alone to Christ, He is God's King of kings and Lord of lords; it is reserved for Him. The path to universal dominion according to God is reached through death, and when God brings forth His King it is as a *Lamb*, and His kingdom is characterised by meekness. He is crowned with many diadems, that is the insignia of empire, a fillet or band of linen for the head. We shall be secured from bowing to usurped rights if we see Christ as Prince of the kings of the earth; but the whole effort to-day is to get God's saints to bow down to man's empire. It is an old story—as old as

Nebuchadnezzar's image, "that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship." There are the songs of empire to-day to compel allegiance to man's rule; but what characterises the faith of the remnant is that they acknowledge God as the "God of the earth." Verse 7 looks on to the appearing, it is in view of judgment, and all kindreds of the earth wail because of Him. In verse 8 He affirms His connection with every title of God in regard of His ways; He takes them all up.

There are three expressions which cover the present moment, the tribulation, kingdom and patience in Jesus; all three are connected with "Jesus." The Roman empire was in the ascendant, it had banished John to Patmos; but what marked the condition "in Jesus" was patience: it was the moment of tribulation and patience. When the Lord Himself stood before Pilate He said, "But now is my kingdom not from hence"—it had no affinity with the iron rule of Rome (Dan. vii. 7); it was characterised by endurance, going through, abiding under, and that marks the present position. John was in accord with the revelation he was about to receive, for he was in banishment, he was himself enduring tribulation, but it was for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The word of God is a very wide expression, embracing the greatness of God's testimony in relation to Christ.

John hears "behind" him (ver. 10) a great voice; the position is marked, and verse 12 says, "I turned." It seems to mark a very different

character of things to what we get in the gospel. He had to turn from normal Christianity to take it up. He had to turn in that way from Paul's line of teaching, though addressing Paul's assemblies, and take them up on the ground of their responsibility. Then he was to put this revelation on record without fail, and the church was to receive it; there was to be no doubt about its transmission. All the seven churches were to receive it, as taking in, no doubt, the "all they which are in Asia" which had turned away from Paul. (2 Tim. i. 15.)

*(To be continued.)*



#### FELLOWSHIP IN SERVICE.

THERE is much misapprehension on the subject of fellowship in service. Saints give it a low place and often a wrong one. They think, for instance, that they, without question, may serve in fellowship with those with whom they have no communion at the table of the Lord. They do not see that our fellowship in Christ is the first thing to be owned, and that this is properly displayed at the Lord's table. If I am not agreed with one as to this, how can I consent to sink this vital ground of communion, to take up with him the lower ground of service?—J.B.S., 1868.



#### TO OUR READERS.

*Owing to misapprehensions brought to his notice, the Editor desires to state that he is responsible for articles bearing no name or initials.*

*Other contributions carry the writers' names in full on the first occurrence; after that, their initials.*

# THE UNVEILING.

(BRIEF NOTES OF PRESENT READINGS ON THE REVELATION.)

(Continued.)

(REV. I. 12—II. 7.)

How immense the privilege that we should be permitted to know our Lord's mind and attitude now that He is absent! The revelation He has given us covers the whole period of that which is characterised here as "the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus." He unfolds His mind in the letters to the seven churches in regard to every phase of the church's history to all who have "ears to hear," that they may know and recognise the Spirit's voice, as interpreting to them the present activity of Christ, who is here presented not in priestly service, but judging in the midst of the churches.

The very one who had rested in the bosom of the Lord at table when He was here on earth, has now to turn that he may see Him who spake with him, and the communications He gives him are by signs. Having turned, he sees One like unto the Son of man—the One to whom judgment has been committed; and though there is reserve in the Lord's attitude, His love for His church is the same, so the apostle can say, "To him who loves us." If the Lord takes up a position of reserve towards us, it is only with a view to our restoration.

In John xiii. the Lord takes up a place of service towards His own, but it is bondman's service; He girds Himself and washes their feet; but here He is seen in a garment down to the

feet, a garment calling for respect and awe, as characterising the One governing in the midst. His service in John xiii. is taken up to bring about intimacy, and that goes further even than communion, but here there is distance and reserve. It could never have been said to Ephesus, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen" unless there had been intimacy, but the Lord is seen as girt about the paps with a golden girdle; His affections are girded; they are not free to flow out. Then His eyes are as a flame of fire; He discerns among the churches, but all with a view to putting persons right. By-and-by He will put *things* right, but here He is concerned with persons, so that He might be free to enter in and sup with the overcomer and he with Him. His feet as fine brass have special reference to the place of judgment He has taken up in the midst of what is here. The candlestick brings in the thought of corporate testimony; it was seen in the early stages of the church, but we cannot speak of the candlestick to-day, though the *light* is maintained. He is seen amongst the seven golden candlesticks: in the type there was but one candlestick having seven branches; there was, in that way, no independence in the testimony, each lamp depended on the stem for support and light. The lamp never loses its character; it is still "golden;" the vessel of the light of God must be divine in its character: it is what has stood the test of fire, as connected with Christ. The churches do not come in on any individual footing, but as depending on Christ; so in each

epistle they are exhorted to hear what the Spirit says to the *churches*; the communications to each church were to be received by all, so that each one might share the exercise of every other church.

Verse 14 speaks of His hair being white like wool: the figure is no doubt taken up from the Ancient of Days in the Book of Daniel. (Chap. vii. 9.) Christ is viewed in the full maturity of judgment, as having come to ripeness of experience, and all that is brought to bear upon the churches. Yet this is not written to make us fear, though we see the Lord as having taken up this place of unqualified authority, but He lays His right hand upon the apostle and says, "Fear not."

As to the seven stars: while they are identified with the angels (ver. 20), the star is the church viewed according to the standpoint of its authority *from* Christ; the angel is rather from the standpoint *to* Christ in responsibility. He *holds* the stars. He still acts in authority in the very weakest phase of the church's history.

Then He speaks of Himself as the first, and the last, and the living One who was dead—we are liable to death, He never was, yet *He* became dead for our sakes, He who is the living One—Jehovah—I Am. He had been into death and dealt with the whole question of death and corruption, and He holds the keys of death and of hades—the presumptive right to death and the grave is His, and He will bring forth from them all that belongs to Him.

The Lord took up seven churches in Asia

Minor—actual churches on the great Roman highways, and the fruit of Paul's work, as suitable to portray the history of the church during the interval of His absence, and the voice of the Spirit to these assemblies has a living potency, an abiding force. It is the church in its totality that is addressed, looked at in its responsibility. So when we come to the letter to Ephesus, He presents Himself as "he that holdeth the seven stars"—not merely the star of Ephesus. Before any point of failure in any church is touched, He brings forward that in His own Person which will meet just that failure. Here He presents Himself as the upholder of the church according to the divine thought, as set forth in the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks. Departure and ruin had set in even in Paul's day, but the individual is privileged to retire into what was ever true before God, namely, that the church is represented and upheld before God in Christ.

They had not ceased to be an assembly at Ephesus, but they had given up the top shoot of truth—they had "left their first love." It is not any particular doctrine, but His love comes in to keep before us the prime point in what He has to say to us at any given time. So it is possible at any time, and in any phase of the history of the church, to depart from first love.

He has a present mind, and a living voice to His assembly at any period of its history, and the effect of first love is that we hear His voice; there is an answer in affection to His mind. The full light had come out through Paul, but they had

gone back from it; there were works and labour and patience and the abhorrence of evil, but all were disconnected from their true source; they had become their *own* works, having themselves in view and not Himself, and His eye viewed the departure. They had started in all the freshness of first love, and from the glory of the seven golden candlesticks, but the light grew dimmer as they declined from Christ, and there was the effort to keep up appearances, and to clothe themselves with light from without. They put on good works and zeal, and were active in refusing evil, but it was not first love, and the Lord saw the unreality. It was this very thing which was first judged in the church, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira; there was an attempt to appear something which they were not, and summary judgment falls upon them. So here, though they refused ecclesiastical pretension, and though there was still a measure of power with them, yet a divergence had come in between what was really true of them and what they professed, and they stood thus in great danger. The One who had eyes as a flame of fire could see deeper than was apparent, and the whole point is that they might be recalled to first love, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works"—first works are the fruit of first love. Though He can note all that was praiseworthy with them, He has to say, "I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." Everything that was real fruit for God must abide, and be remembered before Him, but the top shoot was lacking. It says of the



true wife, "the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (Prov. xxxi. 11), because her interests and love are all his; it had been the prayer of Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians that the Christ should dwell in their hearts, and this is the prime point to be reached at any time. It is the apprehension of His love in its particular application to the moment.

His warning is lest He come to them quickly, and remove their candlestick out of its place. It was their candlestick, the outward place of testimony and light which they had. Jerusalem had held this place previously; the Jew had the "oracles of God" and the covenants and the promise, and the place of testimony for God on earth; it was His candlestick: but when Jerusalem was destroyed it lost that place, and He takes up the church in Ephesus. The idea of the candlestick does not quite come in at Pentecost, because it involves a public, corporate testimony, and that could only be true of Ephesus after God had publicly set aside that which had held that place previously. There are certain things which are not publicly associated with the church until after the setting aside of Jerusalem finally and completely. In the case of David's house after the revolt of the ten tribes, it is said that God would maintain a candle to His name in Jerusalem (1 Kings xi. 36), but the candlestick idea is over, for there was no longer a corporate testimony.

"First love" was the only thing that could meet the Lord's heart. *First* is not in point of time, it is *prime*—best, like the "best robe,"

moral value is in question. It is the apprehension of His love in the most intimate way in which He presents Himself to the saints at any given moment, and the apprehension of it begets response: it is this the Lord looks for. The top shoot is supremely delicate and sensitive, and a breath of frost checks it; so with first love, the moment we are diverted from Christ there ceases to be the answer in affection to His presentation of Himself. Ephesus gave up the sense of being the bride of Christ—that was the prime point in the truth given to it.

Nevertheless, though the candlestick is removed, God does maintain a light for Himself: a candle—and this is not *merely* individual testimony; there is always a measure of light. There were very bright moments in Judah and Jerusalem after the separation of the ten tribes, but there was no more corporate testimony; there must be unity for the candlestick.

(REV. II. 7-17.)

EPHESUS having lost its first love, took up service as a cover for what was lacking; hence what appeared outwardly was greatly in advance of their heart's appreciation of Him. This is a most dangerous condition, for it is unreality. It is like a lamp dead, without oil in itself, yet having light cast upon it from without. It is in the Lord's mercy to His church that in the next

epistle we read of tribulations and persecutions, that the departure may be checked. His dealings with the individual or with an assembly are the very same; He knows how to discipline; He allows trouble from within or tribulation from without that our hearts may be recalled to Himself.

In verse 7 we get the overcomer introduced; he stands in contrast to Adam. Adam had to keep things under control in a scene which was wholly congenial, and where there was no opposing element. The overcomer has to conquer adverse things, in a scene which has departed from God. It is not exactly aggressive warfare which marks the overcomer, but he stands in the panoply of God against the forces of evil against him. Even the church had given entrance to the world, for the principles of departure seen in these churches are all principles which belong to this world, and overcoming is in relation to these worldly principles which have crept into the church.

The overcomer is given to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God; Eden was not *God's* paradise, for there was the possibility of failure there, inasmuch as there was that which was committed to man's responsibility. Man did fail, and that closed up paradise. But here we have "the paradise of God," and sin can never enter there. It is at the right hand of God that there are pleasures for evermore and that fulness of joy is concentrated; that is God's paradise, and there are no cherubim to guard the way of the tree of life; there is

free entrance for such an One as we see in Psalm xvi. ; One who could pray, "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust." He was One who overcame every principle of this world, and who refused to name the name of a false god. His pathway ends at the right hand of God ; He finds God's garden of delights. Now the overcomer is given to eat of the tree of life, he gets Christ, he finds Him in the midst of God's paradise, and though these promises are all future in their actual bearing, yet we may have the present anticipation of them in some apprehension of Himself in connection with our judging any particular evil which may assail the testimony. God would not have man perpetuate a scene into which sin and death had entered, so He placed cherubim to guard the way of the tree of life, but in connection with the paradise of God the pleasures are for evermore and there is no guard round the tree of life. Christ, as the tree of life, perpetuates that order of man which is according to God and for the complacency of God. The last Adam is a divine Person, and as such gives life, but we appropriate Him as Man.

In the epistle to SMYRNA what comes into view is life and death ; death is annulled and the crown of life is given. Even though death should be the close of the path of persecution for them, yet life is the crown. The Lord presents Himself as the first and the last, who became dead and is alive ; it shews His complete superiority over death ; He has been dead, but He is alive, and He is the last.

The persecution here is instigated by the Jews, for those who claim hereditary religious status are always the most bitter; but they are to be faithful unto death, their fidelity was a public thing, it carried them through to the end, and they receive a public reward, for the whole idea of a "crown" is that which is public—it is a victor's crown. It is some apprehension of the Lord which crowns him, but it is a public award, the Lord's own mark of approval. Tribulation is that by which the Lord seeks to recall the church to Himself; it is a far more healthy condition than that of patronage, which we see in the next epistle. In Smyrna the Roman emperor was killing them, but in Pergamos he is one with them: he has become outwardly christian, and that is far more seductive; the world was in the church. Idolatry having failed to stamp out Christianity, sets to work to seduce the church, and it succeeds. The church receives the pagan religion into its bosom with Constantine; they took over pagan temples and made them christian churches, and they incorporated the pagan festivals and called them christian feasts.

In PERGAMOS we come to the throne of Satan; he has boldly taken his seat now, he dwells there, and there is martyrdom. They were awaiting it in Smyrna, but here it has come; but the Lord takes note of their position, "I know . . . where thou dwellest." Satan is the adversary; it is his title according to all these epistles to the churches; he is the adversary of the testimony. Then the Lord names Antipas—"My martyr, my faithful one"—how He

valued him! He had stood to the death against the seductions of the adversary.

When Balaam could gain no point in cursing the people of God, he gets entrance through their worldly associations, and succeeds in seducing them; we have to beware of our links with the world, we may be drawn aside through the ties of flesh and blood.

The Lord addresses the "angel" of the church and says, "Repent"—he stands in the place of responsibility for the church, and except he repent the Lord will come to him and fight against him with the sword of His mouth. It is a sword with two edges; it cuts both ways.

The promise to the overcomer again brings in the Man of Psalm xvi.: "I will give to eat of the hidden manna"—that which was treasured up under the eye of God. The golden pot in the ark contained the record of all that Christ was under the eye of God in that hidden, but divinely perfect, life which He lived here. Men could take note of the outward acts of grace and goodness which He did, but the secret springs of His heart were open to God and were wholly for His pleasure. The manna ceased for Israel when they reached the land, but the treasured store remained before God in imperishable beauty, and it is here promised to those who refuse to take up the name of this world's god; those who refuse to eat things sacrificed to idols are fed with the hidden manna; they learn what Christ was to God in His pathway here. In the epistle to Ephesus the overcomer is promised to be given to eat of the "tree of life, which is in the

midst of the paradise of God," that is, what He is in the presence of God where there is a scene wholly congenial; but the manna is what He was in a world which was contrary to Him. All was against Him here, but He could say, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage"—His heritage was the favour of God, and it sufficed Him.

Then further, there is a white stone given to him that overcomes; it was a mark of acquittal from the Lord, and it was personal between himself and the Lord. No one knows the name written in it but the recipient; it was between his own soul and the Lord, his secret with the Lord, which he held in conscious knowlege. In refusing the seducing influence of the world he had gained some apprehension of the Lord, but it was in the secret of his own soul.

When we come on to the fourth church, THYATIRA, we reach a state which abides till the end. Not only is the angel addressed, but a "remnant" also; "*the remnant*" is all that is true, all that is genuine under the Lord's eye. All that follows verse 24 is addressed to the remnant, not to the whole outward company. The Lord marks all that is genuine, and His care is for that. There is no remnant *in* the church, but the remnant *is* the church; that which had been the church had lost its true character of faithfulness to Christ, and now here He addresses the remnant, all that remains true to Him. It is the real as distinguished from the public body. The history of this church answers remarkably to the time of Ahab and Jezebel:

there a remnant comes into view just as here ; a remnant is what is true to the original. There were seven thousand in Israel which had not bowed their knees to Baal. This is the only passage that speaks of a remnant in regard to the church, and we have to be careful not to limit our thoughts as to it to any particular company ; it is *all* that is genuine in the church of Christ to-day.

In Thyatira we see that the church had become a political body ; it claimed to rule the world ; she had become an adulteress, unfaithful to Christ. An awful expression is used in verse 20, "thy wife Jezebel" (lit.)—the church was viewed under the Lord's eye as married to the world ; it serves to shew how intimately they were connected with this wicked principle. Moreover she calls herself a prophetess, she takes up a public character. In Elijah's day, to all appearance he stood alone, yet God had preserved seven thousand for Himself. The nation under its wicked king was apostate, and his wife Jezebel, the tool of Satan, instigated him to further evils. Ahab saw a vineyard and coveted it ; it mattered little to him that it was the inheritance of another, and he was deeply affected when he could not obtain it, for Naboth refused to sell it to him. Then Jezebel appears on the scene and says to him, "Dost *thou* now govern the kingdom of Israel ? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry : I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite"—that was the prophecy of Jezebel—and so to-day, the world has set itself to gain the church for Satan, and as far as what



is outward, and unfaithful, it will accomplish its end. We are in the midst of this character of things to-day; it is not the world in its gross character that we have to fear, but the insidious working in the religious system. This principle is at work in the public body, to subordinate things to Satan, so that he can take up the inheritance; "thou sufferest that woman Jezebel . . . to teach and to seduce." The world held undisputed sway in the church in Luther's day, but a testimony is raised against it, its wings are clipped, the tide of evil is checked, and Sardis comes in. The same is seen in the history of Israel. Jehu came in as a check on the wickedness of Israel; he says, "See my zeal for the Lord," but alas for himself, he failed to judge himself.

Rome claims to rule the nations, but here that is given in promise to the overcomer. It is the "Son of God" who speaks to Thyatira—He who sits on God's holy hill of Zion, and who is to break the nations with a rod of iron, according to Psalm ii. The poor simple believer who overcomes is given what Rome has coveted. But we must be careful to judge in our own hearts the principles of Rome. In Luther's day the Roman principle was full-blown, and Sardis gives us the revulsion from it. It is remarkable that the Lord has not yet publicly judged and set aside such a system of idolatry; He gives her "space to repent"—but she does not choose to repent, she is wedded to her evil, so in chapter xviii. we see Babylon fallen; the sentence pronounced here has taken effect. Though there are those who

share her doom, it is except they repent of *her* deeds; they are cast into a bed—their condition is confirmed. You cannot touch these principles without coming to moral death—her children are “killed with death”—they are those who take character from her, and there are many such.

THE warning to THYATIRA is very plain: to partake of idol sacrifices is to celebrate and give place to the god of this world; eating is communion, and we have to flee anything that would connect us directly with Satan. There are awful depths of evil which the Christian need never touch or know, and those who are true to Christ are marked in verse 24 as those “who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak.” The blessed contrast to that is that we *are* given to search by the Spirit the “depths of God.” (See 1 Cor. ii. 10.)

Rome took over the assets and liabilities of Paganism; it took it over as a “going concern” as men speak, with its temples, its festivals, its customs—think of the Pantheon as a Christian

temple! And the whole of the education of the moment is to get people prepared to receive and appreciate Satan when he arises in a man.

The promise to the overcomer is to him that "keepeth my works unto the end"—that is a great stimulus to us. The Lord went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; He did not stop at home doing good, so to speak, but He was active in it; He went about. He pleased not Himself, but He was occupied in positive good; and good works are largely insisted upon in all the later epistles; they flow from following good principles.

Not only is the overcomer given to rule, but he is given the "morning star": it is the apprehension of the Lord as the One who is about to bring in another day; the day of the second psalm, when He will rule the nations from God's holy hill of Zion. The overcomers are not a select class; you must overcome, or sink down; it is overcoming or nothing in scripture; we have to be in downright earnest.

Then next we come to the epistle to the church in SARDIS. (Chap. iii. 1-13.) The Lord presents Himself as "He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;" they had forgotten the power and presence of the Spirit of God, and they have to be recalled to it, in all its perfection as before God. The seven stars shew Him as the One who has supreme authority in the church. This letter has historically to say to the days of Luther and those contemporary with him. In rescuing the scriptures from the

place of obscurity into which Rome had plunged them, there was a tendency to put them in the place of the Spirit; every word of scripture is indeed God-breathed, divinely inspired, and is given by God as the record of the revelation of Himself, but they must never be used to set aside the truth of the presence and activity of the Spirit of God here. Romanism says, "We have God on the altar;" but Protestantism practically said, "We have God on the pulpit cushion"—both really set aside the truth of the Spirit here. There was an immense stride in leaving Romanism, but it fell short—it did not go the whole way; there was a step into light, but mere *protest* against evil will not carry you far enough. So having rescued the church from the clutch of Rome, they handed it over to the civil power, and Christ has to exert His authority as having the "seven stars." We are in the midst of this state of things to-day, and more than that, they are principles which find an echo in our own hearts. How few of us are really in the good of the presence of the Spirit here? Unless the scriptures come in vital contact with our souls, we are little profited by their possession; they become operative when they touch my soul; they are the "word of God" to *me* then.

The works of these saints here were not complete in regard to two things: they failed to apprehend the presence of the Spirit here, and they did not take account of the supreme authority of the Lord in the midst of the churches. The Reformation came in in the way of removing the *débris*, that the fresh springs of truth might

be reached, but it is sorrowful to see how those so used of God fell short of the apprehension of His complete mind, so that the Lord has to speak to them here as having "a name that thou livest, and art dead," and even as to things they had received they were "about to die." Responsibility comes in in their having received and heard; they had a great measure of light, and great light brings great responsibility. We ourselves are responsible for the light brought out at the Reformation, for good as the light is, and pleasant, it brings its measure of responsibility. The servant who knew His Lord's mind and did it not is the one who is cast out.

The warning here is a very solemn one, "Be watchful"—it involves exercise. The same words are used in connection with the battle of Armageddon, "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments." Things had come to a very low pass in Sardis, the Lord can take note of a "few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments," and His promise is that they shall walk with Him in white, "for they are worthy." The white garments are integrity of heart, resulting in purity of walk.

When the Lord comes for His church it is not as here, "as a thief," but with this assembly, instead of getting the good of His coming with joy, they will find themselves on the same level as the world. It is so with the wicked servant, and he is cast out into darkness, to find his portion with the hypocrites. If you are not true to the name you have, you too will find your place there. On the other hand, there were

some whose names were known to the Lord, the "Lord knoweth them that are his"—He has personal knowledge of them.

Our resource is the same as that of the saints in Sardis, it is Himself as having the seven spirits of God and the seven stars; He presents Himself in the completeness of administration and government. Their works had not been "complete"—but *He* is complete in spiritual power and authority, and He calls on them to "strengthen the things that remain which are about to die."

When the whoredoms of Jezebel were too great for God to go on with them any more, He raises up Jehu, one who can say, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord"—yet his works were not perfect. He cleared away Baal-worship and purged the altar of the Lord, but that was a negative good—it did not go far enough, and it did not save Jehu. He too has to be removed in his turn to make room for "the king by the pillar." (2 Kings xi. 14.) Sardis gives way to Philadelphia.

There was great need for repentance, if they had a name to live, but were dead—but God never overlooks repentance: it is His door of hope for us. We have to take our part in repenting, for the shame of Rome or of Protestantism is our common shame. The Lord always addresses the whole church, so that what He says to one phase of the church has its voice to all. Elijah did not take up the common shame of Israel when he prayed against them to the Lord; he ought to have prayed *with* them;

and he is replaced by Elisha. Daniel took up the sin of the whole nation. If we know ourselves, and have taken our true measure in the light of the cross, we shall have no difficulty in taking our common shame with all that has failed here.

The promise to the overcomer suggests a very solemn possibility—"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." Some might have a place there at one time and yet have to be blotted out. It all helps to establish this, that being merely good Protestants will not save us, there must be the vitality of actual contact with God by His Spirit.

Now the sheet anchor of PHILADELPHIA is that they lay hold of the sovereignty of Christ; as a divine Person He is sovereign. He is the true Seed-royal, the heir of all things. The key of David was Mount Zion; it was the key to his kingdom and to his character. It was there that he instituted this song, "His mercy endureth for ever." It was from thence that the mercy of God went forth. The great point for us is to see that Christ holds the administration; His sovereignty can hold the key to the position. Our weakness does not matter one bit, for He has the key to the position, and once we come to know His sovereignty, we shall see Him open and shut doors just as He wills, apart from all that we are in our weakness. If we take things into our own hands, we only bring in disaster, but He has His own testimony in hand, and He opens when and where He will. The marvel is that we are not submerged, but He sees to it that His testimony

is maintained. They have a "little strength," that is, they are not submerged. There is a state that corresponds to that of those in Philadelphia, and they stand for the whole church of God. Their great enemies are those who hold to traditional religion, but He makes them to come and worship before their feet, "and to know that I have loved thee." That is not any particular class; it is open to all who can take this place, and He vindicates the objects of His love.

The present church-period is marked by the "kingdom and patience of Jesus"; it shews the character of the moment. The word of His patience is what marks the period of His absence. We have to stand by and see Him open and shut doors; we stand with Him in it, but it is not the moment of our doing anything. As far as earthly hopes go, the whole thing collapses; the nail fastened in a sure place is removed, Christ is cut off, but everything is unfailingly established in resurrection. Mount Zion is the citadel of our hopes, it is Christ in resurrection. We do not get an apprehension of David's kingdom until we reach Mount Zion. Christ controls the whole position in resurrection, and the knowledge of this is the secret of endurance on our part. Jebus was on divine territory, but it was usurped; it was in the hand of the enemy; then David comes on the scene and takes away the blind and the lame, and secures the whole divine position. We need not fear those who take up a divine position falsely, for Christ holds the key to the whole position; He has supreme control, and He can take away the blind and the lame. The pre-



tensions of traditional religion are seen in those who occupy divine territory and have no right to be there. Christ is coming quickly; He is hidden at the moment, but He is going to be brought forth, and He will have the overcomer to stand by; such will be made pillars in the temple of His God, and He will stand by them in the day when He is manifested. There is no public witness to Christ as having the key of David to-day, but it will yet be shewn that He has supreme control of the position. He says "hold fast"; you will be vindicated shortly. In Laodicea He only comes for judgment, but in Philadelphia He will justify those who have stood for Him.

The pillar is testimony, it is the King's stand-by. The two pillars in the temple were Jachin and Boaz; they were conspicuous; they formed the entrance into the temple. They were the witness to God's sovereignty, and you learnt the truth of them as you entered into the temple. Jachin and Boaz were the two great standing witnesses to the sovereignty of God—"He will establish," and "In him is strength"; that lies for us as for Israel in the knowledge of His sovereignty, *outside all* the failure and ruin of man. They were the king's stand-by. The church now is the "pillar and ground of the truth"—whatever the failure of man may be, that is what God connects with His church. Christ here takes up a public place of strength on man's behalf. Strength will never be in the saints, it will always be in Christ; they are to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

The force of "writing" in verse 12 seems to be

public, it is the public stamp of His approval. The word of His patience then becomes the public word; it is His public owning of them. They get in that way the freedom of the city. The writing is upon the pillar; they are named, just as Jachin and Boaz had names; it is what stood in relation to the testimony. The overcomer stands in relation to the glory of Christ, and in relation to Christ's God, and to Christ's city, and Christ's name; he gets public glory, but in connection with the name and testimony of Christ.

It was according to the place and work of the mighty men in the moment of David's rejection that their place in the annals of the kingdom was determined. All Christians have the privilege of overcoming; it is not something heroic, it is simply that he stands. The operation of things to-day is that the Spirit maintains you in the patience of Jesus. You go on contentedly with your own work, in the simple sphere in which the mercy of God has placed you, but you have the inestimable privilege of overcoming in connection with His testimony. The things which are to be awarded in the coming day ought to mark us now. The overcomer stands here not bowing to or owning the god of this world, for he is marked by the name of Christ's God. The circumstances of overcoming may be different, but the action is the same; so the encouragement awarded may be different, and the apprehension of Christ is suitable to the circumstances. In this case, they are marked by the name of Christ's God, and by the city of His God, and by

His own new name: "the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God"; he recognises that the rule of that city is heavenly; its administration is not borrowed from earth, it is altogether outside it. It would be a great thing to be impressed with the fact that Christ's God is supreme to-day, and that the principles of His rule are wholly heavenly. Then there is Christ's own new name; it is a name outside the whole religious order. He came into the fold, but only to lead His own sheep out, and He has passed out of it for ever, and out from all that was connected with it. He has a new name now in connection with the position He has taken up in resurrection, and He leads His sheep into a place of security in connection with His testimony. In result they become pillars in the temple of His God and go no more out.

We have to bear in mind as to these epistles to the churches that they connect themselves with the position of the church on earth; it is not the counsels of God, but the testimony, and how He will bring it into display, and our part in connection with it.

## THE UNVEILING.

(Continued.)

(REV. III. 14-22.)

IN LAODICEA we come to the last phase of the church on earth viewed as the outward, professing body. The Lord takes up an unique position; He is outside knocking, and the only response He looks for is an individual response. "If any man hear my voice," &c. As to the corporate thing, its doom is sealed; He is about to spue it out of His mouth, but the door of repentance is still open to the individual, that he may hear His voice.

The thought of the "Amen" is very beautiful; it is not here the "Yea," that is, the setting forth from God's side of all His purpose for man, but Christ is presented as the "Amen,"—there is the perfect response on His part as Man to all the mind of God. He steps into the breach as it were, and presents Himself as the One in whom there is perfect response to the heart of God. God secures unfailingly, in Him, the answer to His own mind. So the Amen is of the deepest importance; it is our response to every aspiration Godward. It brings Christ in—"THE Amen." However poor may be the breathings of our hearts, and however feebly we may be able to express ourselves to God, yet in our Amen we acknowledge that God has secured in man a perfect response to Himself in Christ. The thought of reconciliation is response secured in man to God; man in Christ is for God's com-

placency. Amen is not only "so be it," but "so *is* it"; all is secured in Christ. The church, outwardly, has failed in its aspect Godward, but it has also failed in its aspect in testimony manward; so Christ is further presented here as the "faithful and true witness." Faithful is what is true of Him in regard to all that was committed to Him; but "true" refers to what is intrinsic; it is character—Himself.

Then He is the beginning of the creation of God; there *is* a "creation of God," a creation unstained by sin or failure, and Christ is the beginning of that creation. We get the thought in Colossians i.; the whole creation was made relative to Christ. Before ever sin came in there was a creation of God made relatively to Christ, and He is the Head of it. The fall having come in does not alter the divine thought, and God has secured in Christ all that He set out to secure in man. He is the "firstborn of all creation"—the testimony is in regard to that. Laodicea had been nourished up in the truth of the Epistle to the Colossians (see Col. iv. 16), hence they are treated in responsibility on the ground of what they should have known: they should have known Christ as the One who was "before all things."

Turning now to the state of the church as depicted here, we see that it is one of utter indifference; better to be an open enemy than to be in the light of His love and be indifferent to it. This half-hearted affectation of Christianity is obnoxious to Christ in every way, and He will not have it. It is important to bear in

mind that it is a *state*, not a class, that is depicted here, and as such it is what we are all liable to; we have not to go beyond our own hearts to learn what lukewarmness is. Still, it is what specially marks the closing history of the church, just as it was with Israel, as we see from the prophet Malachi. Self-complacency came in and indifference, and Christ will utterly reject and refuse it. Alas! that though the church started so brightly in connection with Ephesus, yet its latter end, as regards what is outward, is to be obnoxious to Christ, so that He loathes it and rejects it. It is a religious self-complacency that is reached here, but they are morally blind, and poor and naked. Only the knock of Christ can shake them out of their self-complacency, and He stands without, knocking. Outwardly we are in this state of things to-day, and there is a sense in which we, each one, have to listen for the knock of Christ, lest we too settle down into indifferentism. We have to take our common shame in every failure which has come upon the church. The point here is not whether a man is a real Christian or not; that is not taken up; but the Lord is concerned with the outward profession of Christianity. What would keep us from becoming self-complacent would be to take our common shame in all that bears the name of Christ outwardly. There is still something preserved for Christ down here, something that He never will spue out of His mouth, something which is real—but that is not what is spoken of here.

It is wonderful grace that the Lord should

offer counsel in such a condition of things, and it is of the deepest importance that we should appreciate the value of it. There are three great elements which He offers them: gold tried in the fire, white raiment and eye-salve. They would form the full answer to the unreality of their state. Gold is what has stood the test of fire; it has survived the judgment of God; it abides. The wicked in one sense will undergo the fire of God's judgment, but they will not come out of it; but here there is gold which has survived the test of fire, and it is to be bought. There must be the appreciation on our part of the moral excellence of His Person, which went into death and judgment, and has come out of it. Buying is a transaction between you and Christ—"buy of *me*." It cannot be carried out at a distance, it is a personal transaction. The white raiment, too, has to be bought; it is the righteousness of the saints. It is not like the gospel, which is entirely free, but it involves the letting go of all that you are: you buy at *cost*. Christianity, in the good of it, is not without cost. It involves the renunciation of yourself, that *your* shame may be covered, and that you may be clothed with what is suitable to the eye of Christ.

The history of Zedekiah, the last of the kings of Israel, forms a very remarkable parallel to what we have here. He is taken captive and carried to Babylon, and his eyes are put out; so here, the whole thing has been taken captive to Babylon, and its eyes are put out; it is blinded. The church here is seen as fully identified with Babylon, that is, she boasts in the glory of this

world to the exclusion of the glory of God ; she was boasting that she was rich and increased with goods. It was a "Babylonish garment" and a wedge of gold that led Achan into sin and brought disaster upon Israel at the start, and we get the same elements connected with Babylon at the end. It is in view of this that the Lord here counsels them to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire" and "white raiment." The two lines are entirely antagonistic; the two systems are utterly incompatible, so that our opposition to Babylon means ceaseless conflict while we are here. There is an old hymn that says, "And Zion in her anguish with Babylon must cope;" we have to accept that position, it will go on to the end.

While we may judge what we see around us to-day, we have to first judge what is within our own hearts; we are all prone to religious pride and self-complacency, and nothing but the knock of Christ is sufficient to arouse us out of that. And in that way we see how impossible it is for Christ to commit Himself to anything or to any company down here. The having taken up an outward position of separation from iniquity will not ensure the presence of the Lord in any company; it is only as there is an answering holiness and affection in activity that any can claim His presence, and then we must look for very special dealings on His part—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." He has a voice to such.

It is encouraging to see that there is that which is available for the saints, "gold tried in the fire"—it is the moral excellence of Christ



Himself which has stood the test of fire. The white raiment is the mark of separation from the world and its defiling influences. There were a few in Sardis who should walk with Him in white, "for they are worthy." White raiment stands in contrast to the scarlet of the false woman. The effort of the enemy is to get us in some way or other to accept the scarlet, to bow down to the glory of this world; but the overcomer has a definite transaction with Christ, and buys of Him white raiment; there is separation from the world in the company of Christ, and we become clothed with it. How differently the goodly Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold must have looked when they were spread out before the Lord; how poor and paltry must they have appeared to Achan then. Well, the grace of Christ in the eye-salve will enable us to see things in their true light as they appear under the eye of God, and we shall be preserved from touching them. The more we see of Christ, the more shall we desire to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. There is intrinsic value in the Person of Christ—there is true gold. Babylon cannot survive the fire, it will disappear with all its glamour, it will be swallowed up in the pit, but the moral excellences of Christ are what have withstood the fire of God's judgment, and it is in that very fact that they have become available for men, so that by contact with Him we may purchase for ourselves the true riches of the appreciation of Himself.

Then, having bought white raiment, we shall be fitted to come out with Him as the armies of

heaven. (Chap. xix.) No one can buy these things for us; there must be personal, individual contact with Christ on the part of every one of us.

Then He goes on to say, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"—how encouraging that is: "as many as" is not simply individual, but leaves room for others. Mere prosperity and going along unruffled is not a mark of the Lord's approval; but to be convicted and chastened by Him is the deepest privilege. He will not suffer us to go along unchecked in what might tend to bring in separation of heart between Himself and us. He seeks to arouse their consciences, "be zealous therefore, and repent.

He stands at the door; He is outside all that professes His name here; He cannot publicly identify Himself with any to-day; but if any man hear His voice, He will come in. He gives the sense of His secret approval, and He finds a place for Himself. The heart opens, and He comes in and sups with him. It is wonderful that Christ can find Himself a place down here, even though it be a secret one.

Then He sets before them the last great promise to the overcomer, "To him . . . 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." There is the secret enjoyment of that even to-day, but the public approval of Christ is yet to be made good to us. The Father's throne is a throne of pure grace; no judgment is connected with that. The throne of Christ is the throne of His administration; it will have no

element of Babylonish glory in its rule; there will be no principle in it such as marks man's empire to-day. His is a great *white* throne. It is to be overcoming or nothing down here; and because He desires that we may overcome, He gives us these great and precious promises; He desires that we may overcome every principle of this world; that instead of being marked by the scarlet of human glory, we might buy of Him white raiment, so that we might walk with Him.

(REV. IV.)

IN Romans i. 18 we read that "wrath of God is revealed from heaven," because though God's eternal power and Godhead might be clearly seen as expressed to men in the visible things of creation, yet they remained in their ungodliness and unrighteousness. This chapter goes further than that; John is introduced to the invisible things themselves, but in connection with the revelation of God's holiness. What comes before us here as to the universe is the revelation of the holiness of God—"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." Holiness is the great characteristic of heaven, and a door is opened in heaven that the prophet may be enabled to see into that scene which has taken character from God Himself; it is all expressive of what He is in nature. Invisible things are in that way made known to John in connection with the revelation of divine holiness; he is introduced into a scene which evil has never touched.

From chapter vi. onward we see how God deals with what is irreconcilable, but first in chapters iv. and v. we see the whole creation

taken up for His pleasure. John is found in a wholly new position, shut off from earth, and with a door opened into heaven, and what he first sees there is how created things stand in the mind of heaven: "for thy pleasure they are and were created." In chapter i., when the voice comes to John, he is on earth; there is no need for him to be rapt away from earth, because what is in view is the church on earth in its responsibility, but here it is different; he is in spirit withdrawn from earth, the present moment is closed to him, and he is in heaven.

Three great names of God are here celebrated: Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai. Just as in Genesis we get the Jehovah-Elohim: it is the Creator in relation to His creation, apart from the question of sin or the fall. It is only for a moment, as it were, that we are permitted to look at the picture of creation in relation to God apart from the question of redemption. That is brought out in the next chapter, but here it is not introduced; it is simply a question of creation, but God's holiness is celebrated in regard to His creation. We learn that the creation was for *His* will, not for man's will. He is the One who has sovereign right to all; He has creatorial rights as well as redemptive rights.

QUES. Why are the two stones specified, "jasper and sardius"?

I think it covers the whole display of the glory of God. In the breastplate of the high priest the jasper is first and the sardius last.

Then there was a rainbow round about the throne; that refers to God's covenant with the

earth after the flood; it was the sign of God's covenant mercies with the earth, and brought into view the green pastures of the world to come; it was in sight "like unto an emerald." God clears out of the way all that offends, and brings into view the green pastures of His world; it is characterised by verdure and fruitfulness, and there are quiet resting places where you can sit down and meditate. That is the association in scripture of green pastures; we read of Isaac going into the field at the eventide to meditate. It provides a contrast to the life we know of this world, where all is hurry and rush. Noah's offering provides a basis for the bringing in of the green pastures of rest, and then we get the bow as the sign that this has been secured.

Round about the throne are four and twenty thrones, and elders upon them. That shews us that this book is not peculiarly a church book, nor does it simply take in Christianity. It gives us rather the issue of God's ways with men, and, of course, that takes us back to a time very far previous to His ways with the church. The place of the church as in responsibility closes with chapter iii., and we have no more as to it until we come to the bride, the Lamb's wife.

I think the fact of the twenty-four elders would connect our hearts with what had been previously of God on earth. There were twenty-four courses of the priests; it suggests a perfect company, but the twenty-four stand for the whole heavenly company, just as the chiefs of the tribes of Israel stood for the whole nation. The heavenly company takes in the Old Testa-

ment saints. Abraham looked for a city, and he will most surely get it; the heavenly ones are not strictly confined to the church, but embrace all who had heavenly hopes such as Abraham had—"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly," as Hebrews xi. puts it. There are heavenly ones, too, mentioned in Daniel vii. Of course they will not come into the place of the church; that will be peculiar to her for ever; it will be a place of supreme nearness, but we must not forget that Moses and Elias appeared with Christ "in glory."

Isaiah speaks of Christ reigning "before his ancients gloriously"—elders are supposed to be in the intelligence of God's ways. They are characterised here as having "white raiment and crowns of gold." The crowns of gold are conferred glory. In connection with the holiness of the throne, the Spirit is signified by seven burning lamps: it is the symbol of the vindication of the holiness of the throne. In other places it is the seven spirits of God, which would point to perfect heavenly administration in the power of the Spirit.

Then we have the "sea of glass like unto crystal;" that refers to the brazen sea at which the priests washed their hands and feet before they took up the divine service. The brazen laver was for purification; there is no need of that here; it is "as a glass sea, like unto crystal;" there is no need for washing, but holiness is perfected, and there will be no more change. Further on we shall find some standing on the sea of glass. The sea is the everlasting witness

to the need of holiness on the part of those who approach God.

Then we have the four living creatures ; it is a very deep symbol and embraces much. The imagery is evidently taken up from Ezekiel. There are two great orders of beings spoken of in scripture, the cherubim and the seraphim ; these living creatures have some of the characteristics of both. The cherubim are the executors of God's judgment, as we gather from Genesis iii., and the seraphim—the burning ones—celebrate the praises of God. They celebrate His holiness in Isaiah vi. " Full of eyes within and without " would speak of perception as to God's ways. I have sometimes thought that these living ones are but another figure of God's saints ; they bear the character of both cherubim and seraphim, for they learn His executive judgment and they celebrate His praises. God will carry out all His thoughts and ways for creation in the vindication of His holiness.

(REV. v.)

IN this chapter we find the Lord introduced to us under a new title as far as this book is concerned—that is, as the Lamb. We shall have to gain some idea of the symbol before we can really get the truth that hangs upon it. The thought of

the Lamb is continued throughout the rest of the book. In verse 5, He is spoken of as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but this title does not recur. In the blessing of Jacob we read, "Judah is a lion's whelp," and then afterwards "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh come"—that is the King of peace, but He springs from the Lion. The thought of empire means properly *universal dominion*; it is not a mere limited idea as we use it. Men have appropriated the idea and attached the title of emperor to their limited rule, but in the divine idea of it, it is universal rule. God pictures man's empires under the symbol of "wild beasts;" we find it constantly in Daniel, and here too. They are seen treading down and trampling under foot, and crushing what is beneath them. Here God gives the contrast to all that—He brings forward His "Lamb." He sets forth the One who is to have universal dominion under the symbol of a Lamb—no greater contrast could be imagined. If we go back to the start of man's empire, we find Nimrod, "a mighty hunter"—there is the first idea of violence and ravaging in connection with man's empire. But then almost immediately after, we get the first thought of the Lamb in connection with Abraham. He says to his son, "God will provide himself a lamb." Here is the Lamb of God's providing. The fact that the thought of sacrifice is connected with the Lamb, shews that empire in the divine thought is not something to be grasped at, at the expense of others, but that which is obtained through sacrifice, and that, the sacrifice of Himself.



John's gospel speaks of Christ as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"—He takes it away by the sacrifice of Himself. The Lamb is always connected with the earth—the world as John puts it—but that is because empire is in view. As the Lion He treads the vintage, and His clothes are dyed with the "blood of grapes," it is unsparing judgment. The Lion is the executor of God's judgment, but the Lamb sets forth the basis of sacrifice on which all rests.

We get His character first in this chapter, He comes forward as "*a* lamb," not *the* lamb; He will be displayed later on as that. Then He bears "seven horns," setting forth perfect, divine administration. Later on we see ten horns in connection with the wild beast, that is imperfect human administration; but nothing can be improved on here, there is the perfection of divine administration. Now I think that if we accept the thought of empire in connection with the Lamb, we shall see His title to open the book. It is the book of the title-deeds of the earth; and it is written on the front and back sides. God has His complete book of the title-deeds of the earth, and when He brings forth His Lamb, He is competent to open the book, and to loose the seals of it. Man will be powerless to raise a finger to claim the earth. The deeds are written *here*, but at the moment they are sealed. Man's claims to the earth have resulted in "lamentations and mourning and woe," and because of these things, God comes in and takes up the earth for Himself in His Lamb. There was no *one*, not just no *man*, but no being in earth or in

heaven, who could open that book. The great iron-beast could not touch it, only the Lamb, whose moral worth and fitness had been proven in sacrifice and death. He has redeemed the inheritance and He alone can take it up. He is a "slain lamb," that is, He bears the marks of His sacrifice; He has redeemed the inheritance at the cost of His life. Satan on the mount shewed Him all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time, and said, "All these will I give thee, for *mine* they are," and the Lord does not challenge his words, but later on He claims all on the ground of redemption. The marks of His passion will never pass away; He will bear the brands of His sufferings eternally, and we shall see Him as He *is*.

Man might have said, "Who is *strong* enough to open the book?" that is what man would have said, for empire with them is only taken up on the ground of strength; but here it is, "Who is *worthy*?"—the inheritance is taken up in virtue of worth. Every action of His will be justified in the eyes of the universe; it will be so morally perfect; every judgment of His has a perfect moral basis. Every act will carry its own stamp of rightness in the eyes of the universe. Yet it is through suffering and death that He treads the road to empire. Think of Isaiah liii., "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth"—but that was the path to God's inheritance. There is that in His person which will answer to every judgment which He executes. When the seven sons of Sceva attempted

to deal with Satan, they had no moral power for it, and the demon flew upon them and they were overcome; but here is One who has power to deal with Satan and to banish him to the bottomless pit; He accomplishes his destruction in virtue of His own moral worth. God has never given up the inheritance: "the sceptre shall not depart . . . until Shiloh come." I think we see the "rousing up" of the Lion of Judah here, He comes to take up the inheritance. Then He is the "root of David"—the One from whom David received power, and He has prevailed to open the book; when Satan is judged, he will not be able to open his mouth. The Lamb prevails against every foe who could contest His title to the earth. Satan, man, Jew, Gentile, all have contested the right of Christ to the inheritance, but He prevails in the power of moral worth. Then the Lamb has "seven eyes"—He is cognisant of every detail which concerns His testimony on earth; He knows every heart detail, as well as every overt act in connection with the history of His testimony here.

FROM verse 3 we have the great song of praise echoing round the universe as a consequence of the Lamb's having taken the book and being found worthy to unloose the seals of it. It is His worthiness that is celebrated, and He is the only One morally great enough to open the book of the title-deeds of the earth, and to take up judgments such as are seen to be necessary for the purification of the inheritance. It is no question of mere force, but it is in all the power of His own Person that He "prevails" to open the book. We see the rousing up of the

Lion of the tribe of Judah, but when He appears upon the scene it is as "a lamb as it had been slain." It is in such an One that God is going to take up empire, in One who will ever bear in His person the marks of His sufferings. He had proved His worthiness in His pathway of dependence and suffering here. His taking the book sets the whole scene in motion. Many have sought to take the book and open the seals thereof—Napoleon did so, but he had not the moral qualifications for it, and he only brought about a foreshadowing of the judgments we get in the next chapter.

Nimrod, who was the first man to aspire to empire, was the master of wild beasts, and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, but the inheritance was to be Isaac's, and in connection with the taking up of it God shews His principle of inheriting—it is on the ground of suffering and death, the lamb caught in the thicket.

The living creatures here come in rather under the elders; they merge in them here as far as the worship goes. In one sense these four living creatures are another symbol of the heavenly saints in their aspect towards the earth; it is they who call forth the judgments. They have every one golden vials filled with incense, which is the prayers of the saints—the prayers of saints are in that way voiced by the elders. Thus it is to-day; it is the elders who have ability to voice the prayers of the saints. These very ones, here seen in heaven with the golden vials, may be such as have held them upon earth. It is the right of all men in the

house of God to pray, but as a matter of fact it is only the elders who pray, and though transferred to heaven, they still hold this place. They simply *present* the prayers, they do not themselves intercede, as Rome says. They interpret the prayers, the desires, of the saints. The song here is anticipative: it celebrates what will most surely come to pass, and in that way chapter v. closes one division of the Book of Revelation. The details of the judgments about to fall come in later. When God has got the Man morally fitted to accomplish His will, He has everything: the actual deeds of judgment are far less to Him than the having secured the Man who can do them. The only One capable of taking up God's title to the earth is Christ—our Lord—that is what we celebrate in the Supper: we partake “till he come;” but that is properly an act of treason to this world.

In verse 9 the elders sing a “new song,” it celebrates the breadth of redemption, but it is celebrated according to its full results. It means a tremendous change for the earth; it will then be under the reign of those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The song is of praise to the One competent to open the book of God's counsels with regard to the earth. The angels ascribe seven-fold praise to the Lamb: the creatures four-fold. It is marvellous to think of the myriads of angels interested in salvation. It was a song morally when the angels said, “Glory to God in the highest.” “Under the earth” conveys that all creation is taken in; it does not refer to infernal beings. The angels

have no will of their own, they are solely at the will of their Creator; they "do his will, hearkening to the voice of his word." In the book of Job we read of the angels singing at the creation of the universe; they share in the thoughts of God with regard to His creation, but when everything in man's hands has failed, and Christ comes into the scene, they rejoice in the fact that God has secured His purposes in the Son of His love. The government of the world is entrusted to Man, and in Hebrews iii. we read of the world to come as not being subjected to angels, but to Him; but though the angels lose their place in one sense, they celebrate the praises of the One who takes their place. When man is displaced from Eden, the Cherubim come into view; man has fallen from his place of dominion, and the flaming sword is put into their hands. They maintain this place until the Man comes forth, who alone is "worthy" and capable of taking up dominion according to God.

This book is meant to affect us morally; so that we might be greatly affected by the contemplation of His ability to bring everything to an issue for God. It is of little importance that we should be clearer as to the details of prophecy, but the whole point is that we should be brought nearer to God morally by the contemplation of the Lamb of God. The throne and the elders and the living creatures are all at one, and their praise of the Lamb draws response from myriads of angels:—God delights to express Himself in infinite creation, and the very universe is infinite.

## THE UNVEILING.

(Continued.)

(REVELATION VI.)

WE have seen that in chapter v. a "book" comes into view sealed with seven seals; it is the book of the title deeds of the earth. God has not only a creatorial right to this earth, but a redemptive right, and He is going to substantiate His claims to it. Now the question is raised, who has moral worth sufficient to take up and to open this book? Then the Lamb comes upon the scene, the only One who has title to open the book; and His title lies in this: that He has suffered.

From the end of chapter iii. all is future; but the truth presented has a moral bearing on us even to-day in separating us from the course of this world. Many of the prophecies here given have had a partial fulfilment. This is the third division of the Book of Revelation, and deals with "the things which shall be hereafter." (Chap. i. 19.) From this point also, as we know from other scriptures, the church will have been taken up into heaven, but that does not come in here. It is not distinctively a "church" book, though the twenty-four elders take in all the saints of every age, summed up in the complete priestly course of twenty-four.

All heaven is astir here at the events which are taking place on earth. Earth may be but a very little planet, yet the death of God's Son has taken place here, and has had a bearing on the

whole universe; it has a voice to every created intelligence. The whole moral question of good and evil has been raised and settled on this earth. God settles the question for ever in the place where it was raised. It was a question which went outside man, for it took in angels; indeed, it embraces every family in the universe, and the death of Christ has settled the question for the whole universe.

These judgments shew how God recovers for Himself all that had been captured by the usurper. The devil to-day has a place in the heavenly places, and his angels have influence upon earth. He gained a footing and influence upon earth when the fall came about, and man is the battle ground. But then it is in Man that every moral question is solved. If Satan has his angels, there are also the holy angels, who have their place of ministering to the "heirs of salvation." Michael and his angels are actively engaged in supporting God's saints upon earth. We may see wars and tumults, nation rising against nation; but behind all these outward signs we can read the powers of evil at work; and, on the other hand, we know that there are heavenly forces at work on the behalf of men. The earth has come under the thralldom of sin, but that has been the occasion for God to bring in an immutable foundation of right, upon which all will rest for eternity. The man of the world is so circumscribed when you compare him with the Christian: he can only speak of the concerns of this present small world, very often only of



the little corner in it in which his lot is cast : he has no outlet into the great universe of God ; he knows nothing of the vast issues which have been solved in the death of Christ, or of all that has been effected for God in that One.

The four living creatures come into prominence here ; they are the great heads of creation, and it is they who call upon the judgments to come forward ; the real force of the passage is that the judgments are invited to come forth—the moment is ripe. (The “and see” of verses 1, 3, 5 and 7 is interpolated.) Four judgments are symbolized under the figure of four horses ; the judgments are all sent with a view to affect men’s consciences, that they might be brought to repentance if it were possible, but what is irreconcilable has to be put down for the good of the whole, that general blessing may be brought in. The first horse carries a great one, who goes forth conquering and to conquer. It is probably the “wild beast” of the Roman power. It is a destructive power which will come in and upset the balance of nations which men are so eager to maintain to-day. Then, following the white horse, we get a red one, to whom power is given to “take peace from the earth.” It probably anticipates civil wars among the nations. Bloodshed and disaster follow him ; and the conflict is a close one, for he holds a “sword” not a bow.

He is followed by a black horse—famine ; but in this case, there is that which God preserves from the universal destruction ; the word is given

“hurt not the oil and the wine.” God secures that which will be the sustenance of what faith there may be at that terrible moment. That there is faith we may see from the next chapter, the “sealed” are those who are affected by the former judgments, they are spoken of as “servants of our God.” They are those who have passed through the tribulation. In the moment of direst necessity, God can bring forth His oil and wine. Then the fourth horse goes out carrying with him God’s “last four, sore plagues,” bestridden by Death and followed by Hades. They have to say to the “fourth” part of the earth, not to what we speak of as the “Roman earth.” God does not sweep the whole scene at a blow; He leaves room for repentance. Later on He takes in a wider sphere, and the “third part” of the earth comes under judgment. These are preparatory judgments—much is to follow, but God gives every opportunity for repentance.

The prayer given in connection with the opening of the fifth seal is of a Jewish character; God takes note of His martyrs, of those who stand for Him. These are seen under the altar of burnt offering; they are identified with the altar, and with the acceptance of the holocaust. They come to their end apparently through the guillotine. It is remarkable that in the French Revolution, a fore-shadowing of this very time, this method of death was actually in use; it comes up here in its last and most terrible form. These witnesses went the whole course to death

itself; and if we desire to have part in God's witness here, it should mean that we too are, if needs be, prepared to die. There were those who were prepared to fill up the ranks of the martyrs; they were "baptised for the dead." (See 1 Cor. xv. 29.) They had suffered for the rights of God; they had claimed the earth for Him, and in that connection we can understand their cry for vengeance. Many of the psalms have the same character, because from the very outset in Psalm ii. we find God's King sitting on the throne in Zion; and the faith of the psalmist throughout the whole books is acting in the light of that fact. The martyrs here are clothed with white robes; it is the symbol of their approval with God.

Then follows the opening of the sixth seal, and there is a great earthquake; it refers to the structure of society; the sun becomes black, and the moon as blood; the upper strata of society is touched. The supreme ruler, and that which symbolises delegated authority come under judgment, and society is convulsed; everything is demoralized. Then the heavens depart, they are rolled together as a scroll. The source of blessing for men is rolled away; they lose it for ever, and men are heard praying to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Their consciences are awakened, and they imagine that the "great day of His wrath" has come.

# THE UNVEILING.

(REV. VII.)

(Continued.)

IN chapter vi. we have the opening of six of the seals which close the book of God's title deeds to the earth; and it is not until we reach chapter viii. that we find the seventh and last seal opened, which ushers in the terrible judgments with which God will sweep the earth. Intervening between these two chapters we have two wonderful companies brought to light; in the early part of chapter vii., we have the 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel, and at the end of the chapter an innumerable company from the nations. The elect company of to-day is composed of those gathered from both Jews and Gentiles, and these together form the church; but here in this book, the whole heavenly company is looked at under the figure of the twenty-four elders, and they are seen in heaven.

The four winds are a remarkable figure; they seem to set forth certain powers which have to say to the whole expanse of earth. In Matthew we read that the Son of man will send forth His angels and gather His elect from "the four winds." Here we see the great forces pent up and held in reserve by which He will effect His judgments and bring to pass His will. They are too mighty for any power on earth to withstand, and they have to say to the whole earth, both to Jew and Gentile. God pivots the earth on Canaan, and so here, He does not suffer the

winds to blow until He has sealed His elect. The earth, the sea and the trees spoken of here are symbols: the sea pictures the peoples in unrest; the trees, those conspicuous as leaders among men; and the earth, the ordered system. God holds back the forces, and will not suffer His own to be moved until He has sealed them. It is just so in the gospel; what lies behind the proclamation of the glad tidings is the truth of God's elect, yet it is sent forth world-wide; it has a world-wide aspect, a salvation for *all* men, not merely for the elect.

Then an angel arises from the east—from the sun-rising, having the seal of the living God. In Luke it speaks of God's tender mercy, "whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us"—that is the Sun-rising. Men have built their churches with the altar to the east; they have given the truth an idolatrous turn, and put it on the level of a revival of sun worship. But these are visited from the sun-rising, that God may make public avowal of His ownership of them; He seals them on their foreheads; He shuts them off from judgment. The numbers are not necessarily literal; they may or may not be, but they are symbolic; it is 12 multiplied by 12, and by 1,000. Dan is omitted, and Manasseh added; and he is placed before Joseph. It was in Dan that idolatry was introduced; and it is from him that antichrist springs; he is an "adder in the path," but when apostasy comes to a head, then it is said, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." When the thing is full-blown, then immediately God's salvation comes to light. It

is remarkable that when the land is divided in Ezekiel, Dan has the first portion. The seal is the mark of God's approval, and is to screen them from the great tribulation, but the fact that Dan is not named among the sealed might go to shew that he is not exempted from the scourge which we read of in chapter ix. They may have to taste the bitterness of their own sin; they reap the bitter fruits of apostasy there.

God is going to send a fearful time of trouble over the *whole* earth; a time of testing to the Gentile nations, and out of which Philadelphia is to be preserved, doubtless, though not stated, by the rapture. The innumerable company mentioned in verse 9 will come out of this tribulation. They stand before the throne of God, they have access; they shall have a priestly place on earth, and they serve Him day and night. They are the priests; it may be that Matthew xxiv. presents the laity. God brings out a priestly order from the Gentiles, who will serve Him here on earth.

We have to distinguish between the tribulation here, and the time of Israel's trouble. Philadelphia is saved out of this tribulation. Christendom, as we see from the epistle to Laodicea, will be spued out of the mouth of Christ, and with that the fall of Babylon will probably be concurrent.

John is unable to give an answer as to what this great company is, which would serve to shew that it is a company not elsewhere mentioned in scripture; had they been revealed, John would have known of them. Then the angel describes them as those who have washed their robes, and

made them "white in the blood of the Lamb." There are two thoughts: they were cleansed from the defilements of this world system; but making their robes white is a further thing, it is something *positive*; it is the blood of the Lamb availing for practical righteousness. It is the positive basis on which we build our righteousnesses—"the righteousnesses [lit.] of the saints"). The negative side is that you stand aside from the old condition; you "wash your robes"; but then you do more, you "make them white" in the blood of the Lamb; it is the basis of positive approval before God in connection with the death of Christ. They are approved as "worthy" in that they have washed their robes, but the blood of the Lamb is everything as basis. Then in verse 10, they hail God as the One from whom salvation proceeds. The result of their having washed their robes is that they have access: "therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night"—and God "spreads his tabernacle over them" (ver. 15 lit.)—it is the answer to Psalm xci. In Messiah they had made their shelter under the shadow of His wings, and here it is *His* side, He spreads His tabernacle over them. What could possibly harm them there? The probability is that it is the holy city that He spreads over them—the wings of divine empire—but we are not told so here. And He that sitteth upon the throne dwells among them, and they hunger no more, nor thirst any more, but the Lamb leads them by the fountains of the waters of life, and God Himself wipes away all tears from their eyes. This is the last

company that will know the judgments; they had come out of great tribulation; they had suffered from the scorching heat of the sun, but it should light on them no longer; the oppression of human government is at an end, and God Himself covers them.

(REVELATION VIII. AND IX.)

IN one sense these two chapters are the most difficult in the Book of Revelation; they bring into view the unsparing judgments which God will bring upon men in regard of their circumstances. We have to bear in mind that no judgment ever meted out to rebellious man will exceed the judgment of the cross. It is only as we have known and accepted the holy judgment against sin which was expressed in the cross, that we can venture to take up and contemplate these judgments here. We are saved through Him *from* wrath, but *wrath is coming*, and unless we have accepted for ourselves the holy judgment of God against sin, there is nothing but wrath for us.

The effect of the sounding of the first four trumpets is that men's circumstances are touched; but in the later trumpets it is rather men's persons that come under judgment, but all is with a view to giving men space for repentance. The terrible end of it all is "neither repented they," but the opportunity is given. The first four judgments appear to fall upon the earth where



commerce, &c., have place; they are not as severe in character as the last three.

No one but Christ could take up the priestly place described here (vers. 2-4), and add efficacy to the prayers of all saints; He comes forward as the great Angel-priest, standing, not at the brazen altar, but at the golden altar of incense before the holiest.

The Book of the Revelation is not merely a book of judgments, but a book of blessings, and the judgments are incidental to the securing of blessing. All these judgments were foreshadowed in Egypt. Though Joseph had been used of God to preserve life in Egypt, yet we read that "there arose another king which knew not Joseph," and he rebels against God and says, "I know not Jehovah." Then God brings upon him the great and sore judgments which precede the deliverance of Israel, with a view to breaking him down; but the result is the same as here—he hardens his heart.

What is in question here is a limited portion of the earth—"the third part:" it would rather seem that it is the commercial, prosperous part of it, from the allusion to "ships," &c. The "Roman earth," as we say, practically refers to the civilised earth; but the dimensions of that have greatly altered from what was civilised when this was written. But it is certain God's judgments fall where His light has been rejected. The *vials* are poured out on the earth, it does not say the "third part" there. (Chap. xvi.) But here it has evident reference to that part of earth

which has come under the outward effects of Christianity. "Trees" are conspicuous rulers, and "grass" gives the idea of resting-places, and "the waters" are sources of refreshment for men, but all these things are perverted and become death-dealing. Man's literature and all the popular sources of refreshment and inter-communion become bitter: all are under the direction of a great one who poisons the springs of man's life here. He brings in moral death—that which cuts off from God—apostasy. It is quite possible that the men of that day will be unaware of the power behind these things; they will not say: An angel has poured out his vial; they will not hear the trumpets; they will not comprehend the secret working of apostasy.

It is a remarkable expression which we get in verse 12, "the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise"—it would shew that both men's public and private life is affected by the darkness which falls on the sun and moon. Authority and rule is "smitten" and anarchy follows—it is the product of darkness, and there is no protection for man. We can see the seeds of these things even to-day.

In chapter ix. a star falls out of heaven, and to him is given the key of the bottomless pit. This woe has reference to apostate Jews, because those who suffer are the unsealed of Israel; locusts, too, would shew that eastern nations are in view. Then the king over the scorpions is named in the Hebrew and the Greek tongues: Abaddon and Apollyon, both have the same meaning, Destruc-

tion or Destroyer. He brings hellish influences to bear on men, and they are destroyed. "In those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them;" that is literal, their torment will be worse than death; they cannot get rid of their consciences, and the remembrance of God will produce torment of the most awful character. The king over these influences is Destruction, probably Satan himself. There is constant antagonism between the forces of Satan and the power of the holy angels. Men little think when they welcome infidel thoughts of the source from which they arise; they emanate from beings who fell before man was even created. The abyss holds them, yet they have managed to pervert man by the demoniacal influence which caused their own rebellion against God. These things which darken the light and the air will not necessarily be repugnant; it is rather to be supposed that they will come upon men in very enticing ways.

In verse 13 we have again reference to the golden altar of incense. The river Euphrates is the great boundary between East and West, but there is no doubt that the East will rise against the West. The western nations rule to-day, yet we can see even now the weakening of the barriers between the rival forces. Men are falling under the influence of eastern philosophy; Buddhism is an accredited religion to-day. Christian England rules over heathen India and is an ally of Japan. Men are seeking to break

down the moral barrier which God has imposed between the nations; they have, so to speak, been trying to bring up these four angels from the bed of the river. And the evil puts on a most attractive form; it assumes great consideration for men and for the poor; no capital punishment; no eating of meat, but only a purifying and restraining diet; yet behind all these seemingly good things the power of Satan is at work leading men on to apostasy and destruction. When the word goes forth to loose the angels, an awful condition of things will ensue. Both the East and the West will have come under the power of idolatry, and the judgment of God will fall on them in regard of it. We have to judge the principles of evil which will help on the final apostasy.

(REV. IX.)

THE historical order of the book closes with the last verse of chapter xi.: God there gains what He has purposed to acquire, the kingdoms of the world. Then, after that, details are given as to things which have been already touched upon. Side-lights are thrown upon things which have been previously alluded to.

There are seven trumpets; the first four go together, and the last three. The first four fall upon Christendom; the fifth upon apostate Israel; and the sixth apparently on Christendom, but it comes about through the breaking down of the barrier between the Eastern and the Western nations, which God has seen fit to place there.

There is an overwhelming flood of infidelity and idolatry which overflows the West from the East.

In chapter ix. 1 we get the abyss alluded to; it is the bottomless pit, the place where evil is chained: but the lake of fire, of which we also read in this book, is the place of final judgment. The abyss is the prison house of fallen angels, but the lake of fire is the place of the final punishment of evil. The angels which fell are cast down to Tartarus (such is the force of the word in 2 Pet. ii. 4), they are reserved in chains in the bottomless pit. Apparently they fell before the world was fitted at all for men to dwell in, but they have been held in chains ever since; when they are loosed, they will darken the sun and the air with their influences; all the awful wickedness of rebellion against God will be let loose, and men will be swept along by it. Then, in result, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire; there will be an end of evil. Satan never becomes incarnate, he has to use man as a vessel; so the "star" here is probably some great man whom he puts forward. Satan still occupies the "heavenlies"; he is the "prince of the power of the air," and the working of his power to-day is to keep saints from entering upon heavenly territory, from taking up God's purpose for them. It is not to hinder the acquisition of *man's* territory that occupies these evil powers to-day, but that they may prevent him from taking up divine territory. (See Eph. ii. 2 and vi. 12.) "We wrestle [lit. our struggle is] not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of

this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." It is against "the universal rulers," the great world powers of this darkness: it is an amazing statement. We speak a great deal about world powers to-day, but God associates them with these awful fallen beings who are still in heavenly places. The key of the abyss is in the hands of God.

Satan does not appear on the scene except in some guise borrowed for the time being. At the beginning he adopts the form of the serpent, and in the New Testament we read constantly of his assumption of some fallen, sinful man, as with "Legion" for instance. There is no doubt that he can so work upon man as to gain possession of him for his own ends; he can use him as a vessel through whom he can work. He has gained six thousand years of experience of how to bait man with the same old lie, "ye shall be as gods." Scripture presents many striking pictures of Satan: "king over all the sons of pride" in Job, and the "covering cherub" in Ezekiel xxviii. As covering cherub he was put in such a place that he might radiate the light of God to the whole universe, the place which will yet be taken by the church. In Isaiah he is spoken of as "Lucifer, son of the morning," he was the light bearer. But now we see him gathering up men into his grasp, in order that he may seduce them to rebellion against God. The intensity of his hatred against man lies in this, that Christ became man.

The allusion to locusts would connect the fifth plague with the East; then, too, the fact that the

one hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed of Israel, though there are others of Israel who are not sealed; and again, the giving the Hebrew form of the name of Satan would seem to have Jews in view. The scorpion is also an Eastern scourge. The river Euphrates, after the flood, seems to have retained its former position; it forms the great boundary between the East and West. The judgments brought out of the river are purely *symbolic*; we could not attempt to *picture* this army; we look to scripture to give the force and meaning of the symbols used. The interpretation of the symbols is to be found alone in scripture. The death is moral—it is apostasy and those who are not killed go on in their old way of sin; they do not repent. The depths of Satan are unchecked in the East, and this flood-tide of evil will be imported into the West, and then all the barriers will be broken down. A conscience steeled against God is set forth in the breastplates of iron with which this irresistible army of two hundred millions is clothed. They had not received the truth in the love of it; it was set forth in Christ, that they might love Christ, but they refused it, and they are given over to strong delusion that they should believe the lie—it is Satan's lie, the one he introduced into Eden. There is shelter in the death of Christ and in His love, to guard His people from all such influences.

Verses 20, 21 are also symbolic, and allude to the open sin in which men will prefer to live; they will prefer idols to God. Men have wrested certain secrets from God's creation, and they

have put these things in the place of God ; so men here are seen worshipping their idols of gold and of silver, the works of their hands. Apparently this would cover the whole range of inventions. Men are very proud of their discoveries, and we think inventions very wonderful, but they are not wonderful to God, for He placed in the earth ages ago all the forces man now takes up. Men were *morally* better off when they had nothing but a tent and a flock ; they had leisure to think of God then. The death of Christ is the only thing for us ; if we take up prophecy apart from the death of Christ, it can seriously harm us. His death is our only shelter and cover. The moment you emerge from that cover you are exposed to danger ; you place yourself in contact with the god of this age.

#### CHAPTER X.

WHAT is happening in chapter x. is still under the "sixth" trumpet ; it is spoken of as another "woe." The seventh trumpet closes up the



public ways of God with the earth, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. This is a parenthesis which introduces the seventh trumpet, shewing us who is responsible for what is happening outwardly on the earth. They are God's providential ways with the earth, so though we have very good reasons for knowing that it is Christ personally who is behind them, yet He is beheld here as "a mighty angel." He is seen clothed with a glory cloud, a cloud that casts no shadow, but which marks the outward and visible manifestation of the moral glories of Christ. Earth is in question here, not heaven, so He bears upon His head the sign of God's covenant with the earth, the rainbow, the token of God's mercy, as though to shew that in the midst of judgment God will remember mercy. The sun is the central ruling power of the universe, and the face of Christ is as the sun; and His feet as "pillars of fire"—there is the strength of judgment in Him also.

The position He assumes is very important; He set "His right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth"—that is, He claimed both. God in Christ is claiming this earth for Himself: it is the "kingdom of the world of our Lord and of his Christ." It is not this world system, but it is what God made for His pleasure, and that certainly involves the earth. The "earth" gives the idea of the ordered nations, but the "sea," which covers far the greater portion of the earth, refers to the great, lawless masses of men who are outside the pale of law and order. Man has ousted God from this earth as far as he could,

but God claims it in Christ. Verse 8 shews the "little book" opened in the hand of the mighty angel; the time is very short of which it treats. When Christ was here upon earth, He had taken the roll of the scriptures and read in the synagogue from the book of God's *public* dealings with the earth—His open ways with men. He has had open dealings with the earth, but the present moment is the time of God's silence with regard to the earth. While Christ was reading in the synagogue, He was really initiating a new day, the day of grace. He closed the book before the day of vengeance came and initiated the present moment of grace, a moment outside God's public ways. We have come to an interval unforeseen by men, known only to God, the moment of His dealings in grace. It says in Luke iv., "The eyes of all . . . were fastened on him"—that covers the whole nineteen hundred years: He has become the Centre in heaven for all our hearts.

Here the little book opened is the book of His public dealings with man, and it is re-opened at the very place where Christ closed it; the day of vengeance has come. (See Isa. lxi. 1-3.) God will bring in public blessing and comfort for all who mourn, when the earth has been purged by judgments. Every element of the blessing with which God will fill His universe in the coming day is to be found and learned in Christ to-day; He is the supreme point of attraction and interest for men now. The point for us is to have our eyes "fastened" upon Him.

"He cried with a loud voice as when a lion

roareth"—He makes known His power to deal with the whole earth in judgment, and He brings into display the artillery of heaven—seven thunders utter their voices; He commands the forces of heaven. The answer of heaven in power is given to Him, but what is uttered is to be sealed up; it could not be committed to men. He who is the eternal God, by whom all things were created, sware that there should be delay no longer. Wrath is revealed to-day, but it is stayed so that man may come into heavenly blessing, but here the mystery of God is "finished"; it is "mystery" in that it is the secret that lies behind God's actings with the earth. There had been public dealings with men in judgment, such as in the flood and in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but God had a secret behind all His public ways with men: it was that the kingdoms of the world should become the kingdoms of the world of our Lord and of His Christ. God is going to justify Himself publicly; He will be vindicated with regard to all His ways, and when God is vindicated, His saints will be also.

The apostle has to take the book out of the angel's hand, and eat it up; and we learn the effect that touching these things is to have upon us; they are to affect our inmost beings, and to subdue us. If we touch prophecy in the flesh, it simply inflates us and harms us, but we see the effect God intends it should have upon us. The whole inner, moral being is affected by the truth of God's ways.

God makes very short work of judgment, it is soon over. God crushes man's defiance and

rebellion through a Man, and that involves awful woe upon men.

(REV. XI.)

ALL that comes out in this chapter is occurring under the second woe. These are direct judgments of God upon man: chapter x. has shewn us what is behind these open dealings of God. The effect of the second woe, is that the remnant are affrighted and give glory to the "God of heaven." But with the last of the woes the historical part of the Book closes, and God takes to Himself His great power and reigns.

It is wonderful to see that there is something which God *can* measure: a temple, an altar, and them that worship therein. God recognises it; it comes again under His view. There has been an interval during which God has been pleased to grant to the Gentiles repentance unto life, but we see them here as the oppressors of God's people. It is really the fulfilment of the prophetic "half week" spoken of in Daniel—a period of forty-two actual weeks, or three and a half years. Daniel speaks of seventy weeks—a week for a year—and all are fulfilled for faith but the last half week. Faith apprehends that in the ministry of the Lord here the first half week was accomplished, but the last half week is yet to come. A week is a symbolic period, not necessarily a week of days.

In verse 2 we read of "the holy city;" that is its name from the divine standpoint; God reverts to His own thought in the city. Upon earth there are only three families which God

recognises: Jews, Gentiles and the church of God. The "holy city" is always the object of the hatred of Satan; it is the place where God sets His name, and it is that which raises the demoniacal hatred. Nevertheless the spot where God registers His name is in His eye "the beloved city" (chap. xx. 9), "the holy city."

It is the "times of the Gentiles" now (Luke xxi. 24), but this chapter looks on to the closing hours of that period when the oppression of the Gentile supremacy becomes intolerable. (Compare Psa. lxxix., 1-3.) It is followed by a time of woe for man, as God wrests from his grasp the world which he has usurped.

God will vindicate His testimony, whether it is that of to-day, which is marked by outward weakness; or whether of that day when there is power connected with the witness outwardly, as we see here, "I will give [power] to my two witnesses." The fact of there being a temple and worshippers would shew that at some period a measure of recovery had come in with Israel. There were two olive trees too, and two candlesticks. God is made known as the Master of the earth here, and there are two witnesses to that fact. When Christ was here, as we see in John's gospel, He was the Master of the earth, but He did not take up His rights; He bore witness to them in riding into Jerusalem, the centre of the world, but though claiming the earth He also says, "But now is my kingdom not from hence." (John xviii. 36.) He would not take up the world as it was. He came here to present God as Saviour in grace to men, so

that it could be said, "Never man spake as this man."

The two witnesses here appear to have the combined character of Moses and Elias. There is adequate testimony. They have power to shut the heaven that it rain not, and to smite the earth with plagues; that is prophetic testimony, but the time comes when that testimony is over. Nothing is suffered to harm them until that moment arrives. What they do is appropriate to their time, and the character of their testimony.

When God was about to inherit Canaan by Israel, the word was "The ark of the covenant of the God of all the earth goeth before you;" so here, He is about to take up the earth, and nothing is allowed to stand in His way. The great point is to understand the testimony of the moment and how to act in it with God, neither behind nor before Him. The beast in verse 7 is the fourth beast of Daniel, the Roman empire, revived and coming upon the scene with diabolical power behind him. His number is 666, and no doubt this is given for the saints of that day that they may be able to identify this awful being. The number has many moral thoughts connected with it, such as being short of perfection, figured by the number seven. Antichrist becomes the lieutenant of the Roman power and makes all yield to it. So we find a trinity of evil matched against God: the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, that is, the Roman empire in its head, with Satan behind him, and the false prophet, who is a Jew, the antichrist.

The testimony of the two witnesses is con-

nected with the city which here is spoken of spiritually as Sodom and Egypt (Egypt is darkness, Sodom is corruption), and the city "where also their Lord was crucified"—these are the characteristics of the city. God's thought of it is a "holy city," but committed into the hands of fallen man, he has stamped it with his own character.

The moment comes when the world gets rid of every trace of God; the witnesses are slain and their dead bodies lie in the street unburied, and all is over. Then the world makes holiday; they keep their victory in memory, they will not suffer them to be buried. The "spirit of life from God" entered into them, that is God's answer; nothing else will support us in testimony but the spirit of life from God. They are put on their feet spiritually; vindicated in life and power, and standing up again in life. Those that dwell on the earth had not taken account of the mighty power of resurrection, but God here brings it into operation; and they are vindicated publicly in the place of their testimony before their ascension to heaven.

There is nothing which so draws forth the animosity of Satan to-day as that there should be such as are able to stand upon their feet as the result of the spirit of life from God. The great world-ruler has succeeded in darkening everything, and in deadening the truth, but God in marvellous grace has given a reviving of the truth in a power which Satan cannot withstand.

(REV. XI. 15 ; XII.)

IN verse 15 we read, "The kingdom of the world of our God and of his Christ is come," but the inauguration means "woe" to this world. It is the final disentanglement of good and evil committed into the hands of Christ, and that must involve judgment. What comes into view here is another kind of world altogether to the one we know, a world which has taken nothing from this present world, but where every principle is according to God. Not only is there to be a kingdom, but a world put under Christ, an altogether new system of things. God delights to declare His anointed Man—"His Christ;" and the kingdom that He sets up is an everlasting



one; "He shall reign for ever and ever." The principles upon which His kingdom rests are eternal in character; there is no element or decay in that which He inaugurates here. Even though He yields up the kingdom that God may be all in all, as we see from 1 Corinthians xv., the moral principles upon which it is based will abide.

Voices from heaven usher in this kingdom; all movement commences from there, and the kingdom is established before the judgment takes place. Whether heaven, where Satan had place, or earth, where he corrupts man, Christ takes possession of everything; nothing can withstand His triumphant march. It calls forth the acclamation of heaven, and the thanksgiving of the elders. Every act of Christ here served to bring God into prominence, and now God delights to bring *Him* into evidence; He has supreme delight in Christ. God has treasured up before Him all that Christ was to Him as Man, and when heaven is opened, it discloses the Ark of the Covenant there.

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Verse 18 closes this part of the Book of Revelation; verse 19 is parenthetical, and ushers in the second part of the book. It is the "shrine" that is in view in heaven; that part of the tabernacle which never was open to man, though it pertained to Israel with the oracles and the covenant, and it was of them that Christ came after the flesh. Everything for God and for Israel hung on the ark, so what follows here is that Israel comes into view according to the divine

mind. What is opened up in the heavens is what had been before God all the time, but hitherto all had been behind the veil; now the veil is gone and God acts in the light. He first brings on the scene Israel according to the divine mind. Moses had seen the people according to this chapter; he had seen a pattern of what was in the heavens; that is, outside all failure. God took possession of the land of Canaan in the ark; it was the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth, and its entrance into the land meant war on the inhabitants. So here directly the ark is displayed, the judgments are executed. There is the closing up of the mystery of God, and His ways become public.

Chapter xii. opens with the birth of the "man child," that is Christ looked at in connection with God's ways. It is a "male son" sprung from Israel, who has the covenant and the promises and the adoption. The woman is seen "in heaven"—that is as God sees her; and she has supreme authority; she is clothed with the sun, and the moon is under her feet—that is, all subordinate authority is beneath her. That is Israel looked at as the one "of whom Christ came." The divine thought of Israel is treasured up in the church now.

The "dragon" is the great accuser, but energising the nations of the earth; his tail drew the third part of the stars, that is subordinate authority; they were the stars as supreme above the nations forming the Roman empire; there are angels of darkness, as well as angels of light. The archangel Michael comes into view in con-

nection with Israel; "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan. xii. 1.)

The dragon only secures imperfect administration through the powers; he has but ten horns; but he secures perfect regal power, he has seven heads. It is the dragon as Satan that comes into view here, presenting not merely the Roman empire, but that empire in its prince and god, Satan. Christ, as born of Israel, is the supreme point of attack; but it is viewed here from the divine standpoint, and does not touch the question of time at all. So this persecution came into effect the moment Christ was born; the Roman beast institutes this opposition to Him immediately He appears, and Herod sends out and slays all the children; and even Christ Himself was carried into Egypt. The dragon is the adversary—Satan; so at the outset of Christ's public ministry he meets Him in the wilderness with the words "If thou be the Son of God"—he contests the point with Him at once, ready to devour Him. Hannah asked for a "male son"—one who could deal with the lawless state of things then prevailing. Here we have the true "male Son," to whom all Israel looked forward. It is in a Man that God is going to shepherd the nations with a rod of iron.

"Her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne"—that is a simple statement, but how much it involves. In the fact of Christ coming in flesh, a new generation is involved; when this child was caught up to God, it really involved the catching up of all that was for God here; it

includes the heavenly saints, those who have part in the rapture. We get a similar thought in Timothy, "received up into glory,"—that probably takes in the new generation, though primarily it has reference to Christ. It is the close of the line of God manifest in the flesh; so the man child is pre-eminently Christ, but not exclusively so, for it includes all that is of Himself. All was effected for God in the ascension of Christ, and all abides in Him now. Time does not apply in heaven; things are viewed from the divine standpoint.

He is to rule with a rod of iron; Psalm ii. speaks of His "breaking" them with it; but it is not exclusively the thought of judgment, for literally it is "He shall shepherd them with a rod of iron." He is not yet seated on His holy hill of Zion in public display; nor would He touch the world as it is to-day. Everything hangs upon Christ, and His position as "caught up" means the displacement of Satan from the heavenly places. The world rulers of this darkness are to be expelled from heaven, for the church as the "holy city" is to have her place there.

The "woman" flees into the wilderness, into a place "prepared of God" for her; that will be when the church is caught away. The godly remnant will stand for Israel to God, and He will prepare them a place, where they will be in safeguard. She is there for "a time, times, and half a time," it is the last half week of Daniel. Faith recognises that the three and a half years of the Lord's ministry here were the

fulfilling of the first half week ; but for unbelief, the whole week is yet future.

War in heaven is the consequence of the transference thither of the male child. Michael assumes the aggressive ; he makes war. Satan had been cast, as profane, out of the mountain of God ; now he is thrust down from the "heavens," the lower heavens, to earth, and then to the abyss, and, finally, to the lake of fire for ever. Awful descent from the heights of heaven to the lake of fire and torment.

A symbol deals with facts, but it presents the *moral* character of the facts. The "sun," for instance, conveys the moral character of supreme authority and rule. A type is a foreshadowing of a reality.

The dragon contests the place of the saints in heaven, but he is defeated and cast out. He was allowed in divine providence to remain in heavenly places—probably the atmospheric heavens of this earth—and, as there, to have rule over the destinies of the world kingdoms. (See Dan. x. 13.) Satan is "prince of the power of the air." (Eph. ii.) And there are "the world-rulers of this darkness." (Eph. vi.) The influences which move men are largely due to the movements of these fallen, spiritual beings. This chapter brings in the moment when Satan and his angels are finally expelled from heaven, and when he loses the place which he now has of anti-priest ; his place now is one of accuser of the brethren. In the case of Job he is instrumental in pointing out the course of testing for him, if by any means he may seduce him

from his confidence in God. He takes up a place of imitation of Christ, and becomes in turn anti-priest, anti-king and anti-prophet, if one might use such terms. His expulsion gives occasion for a song in heaven: "rejoice ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them."

(REV. XII.; XIII. 1-10.)

THE dragon is overcome "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." The dragon had claimed the earth, but Christ demonstrated His claim to it in dying to redeem His inheritance. It is through death and suffering that He has reached the throne, and it is by His blood that the dragon is overcome.

Satan had power over the body: he has the "might" of death, it is not the authority of it, but he can use it to terrify men. We see how he rolled death in upon the soul of Job; every sorrow is brought to bear upon him short of death; he could not kill him. Life and death are in the hand of God.

The thought of the Lamb is always connected with the earth, and it is in the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, that they overcome Satan, the great accuser of the brethren. There are such as are maintained upon earth in faithfulness to Christ; they are not properly heavenly saints, but saints on earth who will get a heavenly portion. In view of the testimony of Christ, they "loved not their lives unto the death." Satan had inveterate hatred towards them; he accused them day and night, just as he does to-day. He is not yet cast out of heaven, but God overrules his accusation and his cursing for blessing. In the case of Job it is

most encouraging to see that the worst he did for him was used to produce a greater Job than could have been before his testing. And again, in the case of Joshua the high priest, who appears before the Lord in filthy garments, the result of the accusations of Satan only bring about for him a change of garments. If a Christian is delivered to Satan to-day, it is only for the destruction of the flesh.

When God created the firmament on the second day, it is remarkable that He does not pronounce it "very good," as in the other cases of creation. We have to accept the statements of scripture, and to bear in mind that Satan is now "the prince of the power of the air." It will be woe to the earth when the devil is cast down to it; he knows that he has but a short time, and he will make the most of it. There will be war in the heavenlies, and he will be expelled to earth, and from thence he will find his place in the bottomless pit. God permits no rivalry in this book; before the heavenly city can get her place in the heavenlies the adversary must be cast down.

Having his place upon earth, Satan persecutes the woman, that is Israel looked at as the one through whom after the flesh Christ came. This is the time of Jacob's trouble, as it is elsewhere called. But God nourishes the woman, and though water is cast after her like a flood, it cannot overwhelm her; God annuls the enmity of the dragon. This will probably be through His providences, as also in the two great wings given her. She comes in some special way under the

protection of a great power. The "earth" presents the ordered nations; the "sea" rather the great heathen nations; it is the ordered nations who help the woman in her extremity. The "river" would typify something running in a particular direction, for a special purpose, but the earth annuls it; it swallows up the flood. The ordered nations refuse to allow the destruction of the woman.

The "testimony of Jesus" is what is precious to the heart of God; it is here connected with the Jew. Their testimony is that He will reign, and it involves suffering. The moment of testimony is always marked by suffering: it is so to-day; but it is what best befits the time of His rejection. We may each have part in the testimony of Jesus: it is the testimony of the despised, lowly Man, as far as men's eyes saw; but that One, who is the delight of heaven, is going to reign. All power is committed unto Him, but as He Himself said, "My kingdom is not from hence"—it bears an entirely different character to anything that obtains here. It is great joy to have before us the day of His reigning.

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In chapter xiii. an awful being is brought before us under the figure of a "wild beast." It is the revived Roman empire, the fourth and last phase of empire as presented in Daniel vii. As far as men go, the title Emperor of Rome ceased to exist in 1806: yet it is to have a kind of resurrection, but it is from the pit. There is a trinity of evil against the saints of that day—the beast, the dragon and the false prophet;



Satan, the dragon, is behind both the others. The Roman empire "is not" to-day; but the power which has been defunct for centuries will come under the eyes of men; it will re-appear in all its old glamour, and men will be caught by it. The beast appears out of the "sea;" he will rise out of a condition of unrest and insurrection. It was so in the case of Napoleon; he stepped forward without right, as the outcome of the unrest and terror of the French Revolution, and it is so with this beast of empire. On the other hand, Antichrist will be a Jew, though not necessarily a native of Palestine, for he may arise from any other country.

One could hardly think that with all the light that has been given to man he could ever accord divine honours to a man again; yet that is what will eventually come to pass. Even to-day we can see how the whole education of the world is directed towards this end, and when Antichrist appears they will welcome him as the one for whom they have waited, and in whom every aspiration is fulfilled.

The beast in verse 2 comes forward with all the characteristics of the first three phases of empire; that is, he is like a leopard, and has feet as a bear, and the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power and his throne. Strange that man should think that such a being can do better for them than God can, yet all will be deceived by him, only the elect escaping the snare. "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

There are four objects against which he directs his hatred: God, His name, His tabernacle, and

those who tabernacle in heaven ; but all are safe in the keeping of God. The tabernacle has, probably, reference to the church which will then be safe in heaven. Only those are proof against the influence of this beast whose names are written, from the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the slain Lamb ; we are cast back on the sovereignty of God's mercy, but the point where my responsibility comes in is do I *hear* ?

(REV. XIII., END.)

WHAT characterises the second wild beast spoken of in verse II is imitation ; it is the *Antichrist* ; he takes people captive by imitating the graces and virtues of Christ Himself. He comes in "his own name"—he sets himself to secure his own glory, in direct contrast to Christ, who could say when here, "I receive not glory from men." He comes forward here having "two horns like a lamb," but he spake as a dragon. God's Lamb reaches empire by weakness and death ; it is by a path of suffering—He was led "as a lamb to the slaughter." This beast claims both religious and civil power ; he has two horns, and he arises from the earth in contrast to the former beast who comes up out of the sea. The earth sets forth the ordered governments of the world, but the sea presents the revolutionary elements. Napoleon was the offspring of the French revolution.

"The earth and them which dwell therein" corresponds largely to Christendom, and would perhaps include such nations as have sprung from it, such as America and the Colonies ; it is the ordered governments of the world. The earth is what God has drawn out of the restless

mass of the waters, and rendered solid by government.

This beast takes up a place in regard to the first beast as prophet; he is the mouth-piece. Hell is prepared for him—"Tophet, for the king also it is prepared." The first beast possesses the *physical* power of the world, and this one has the *moral* power. The first puts his power at the disposal of the second. His whole character is summed up in what the Lord says of him in the Gospel of John, "another shall come in his own name." It is a solemn consideration for us that if we seek glory from others, though it be in a very small circle—the christian circle even—we are on the line of the Antichrist. We have continually to judge our own hearts, and refuse the tendencies of flesh. As to this beast his voice was the voice of a dragon—the secret of his origin was out directly he spoke. Under the plea of empire the most fearful cruelties will be practised; he takes up for gain, religiously, the methods of the first beast. The Babylonian empire comes first, and what marked it was the image that Nebuchadnezzar set up to himself. All the world was compelled to worship it on pain of torture. All kinds of idolatry are subservient to this one great idol. The beast has power to give it breath—it is not life; none can give that, but he energises him with the breath of hell, and all who will not worship him are beheaded.

Escape from coming wrath is only by the gospel. Salvation is in Christ, and in Him only. Hell is an awful reality, but there is wrath to

come *here* on earth, and the gospel warns men to flee from that. Wrath from heaven *is* revealed, and the imminence of that wrath is what we have to warn men about. Even at this time of which we speak there is something for God; there is the one who has understanding; and in verse 10 we get the "patience and faith" of the saints alluded to.

Both worship and commerce are held in the hands of these two beasts. The two great factors to-day are religion and commerce. When the missionary goes into a heathen land, the trader follows on his steps! Here we find that Satan undertakes the management of the commerce of the world. He binds all into one great Trust, and if men will not bow to it they must die. The trade mark is the mark of the beast; it is apparent in either the forehead or hand. In contrast to this, those who are with the Lamb are marked in their foreheads; there is something very definite about it, something which can be recognised as His mark.

These two beings are two men, and the number of the first is the number of a man. Every letter in both Hebrew and Greek has a numerical value, so that any name has also a number. The name "Jesus" numbers 888, which is very remarkable; truly a resurrection number. Many a name may have the value of 666, a number which seems to contain "the mystery of iniquity," but it does not do to anticipate the counting till the man is here; it will be a proof to those then on the earth. Daniel learnt by the holy books the details of God's ways. Let us study the scriptures

to find Christ in them, and we shall find a clear path through all the intricacies of this present evil world. The number of a man seems to suggest that it is not an aggregate of individuals, but that all is headed up in *one* man.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

There is evidently an implied contrast between the last verse of the previous chapter describing the "wild beast," the number of whose name is given, and the first verse of this chapter, where God's Lamb is brought forward. He also has a name, and it is written in the foreheads of His own, along with His Father's name. (See New Trans.) This gives the fulfilment of Psalm ii., and we see God's King on His holy mount of Zion. These few verses are like a break in the dark clouds of judgment which we have been considering in the previous chapters. It is a kind of parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals.

I do not know that we read of this company, here spoken of, elsewhere in scripture. It was the tribe of Judah that crucified Christ, and it is on them that this peculiar tribulation falls. It is only fitting that they should pass through it, but God secures His 144,000 out of it. It is through tribulation that they are brought into accord with heaven, but they will not be *in* heaven. They come into the good of Mount Zion, "the joy of the whole earth" (Psa. xlviii.), the seat of sovereign mercy. When we contemplate the forces which will be brought to bear on men to bring them to bow down to the world-glory, we

realise how great is the mercy which brings them through unscathed. All the music of the world is brought to entice them to worship the image. (See Dan. iii. 5, 6.) Music effects a false elation, it beclouds a man's true judgment, and disguises his true measure. Here, in contrast to man's music, we have the songs of heaven and of heavenly empire. God's Lamb is celebrated, and the holy empire which depends upon Him. The number of those sealed is symbolic; it is a perfect administrative number, and they are representative from among men, the "first-fruits unto God and the Lamb." There will be no 144,000 secured from Christendom; they have the gospel offered to them to-day, and if they refuse it, unsparing judgment will fall upon them for the rejection of Christ. God had kept His hand upon these, and they were maintained in purity, they were virgins; they had not come under the seductions of the world system. They were in keeping with their true character as "first-fruits"—they were holy. It is what God secures for Himself, the nucleus of the morally new earth which He will bring about. They will come into eternal life, in a new condition altogether, though not a heavenly condition.

In verse 6 we see that God has given an everlasting witness to His "eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. i. 20.) The character of gospel which will go forth in that day is that God has made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters. It is very simple, and there is nothing new in it, but it is the testimony of

creation which men have had from the very outset to turn their minds to God. It is sent to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," that is, rather to the heathen than to Christendom as we know it. Verse 6 speaks of those "settled on the earth" (New Trans.), differing thus from the other occurrences of the expression. Man denies God His title to nature; they appropriate their discoveries in nature to themselves, and name the laws of nature after themselves, as has been recently pointed out, Ohm's law, Kepler's law, &c. But here it is presented as having its source in God; He is the Creator, and all that is for man's refreshment is traced to Him. In old days men connected the fountains with their demons, but they have grown too wise to do that to-day. It is only by God's gracious ordering that the fountains have been preserved as springs of refreshment for man all through the centuries; they are an eternal witness to His mercy.

In verse 8 we get the first mention of Babylon in this book—"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city"—Babylon presents a principle which runs through the whole of scripture; it has its foundation in man's pride. The thought of unity is always connected with it, but it is spurious unity. The devil has had his counterfeit of the divine thought of unity from Genesis x. onwards. Then Babylon has a glory attaching to it, but it is man's glory as opposed to God's. Every principle connected with Babylon is at variance with Mount Zion, and the more God brings in the principles of His holy

mount, the more the devil seeks to neutralise them by the introduction of some human principle, some Babylonish garment or wedge of gold, it may be. When Babylon is in the ascendant, Zion is hidden; and when Zion comes out in glory, then Babylon falls, and falls for ever. The moment Nebuchadnezzar said "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" the voice came from heaven, and he was driven out from men, and became as a beast. The judgment which fell upon him anticipates the final judgment of his system; he anticipates in his own person what becomes true in his empire. It became under God's eye, in the hands of men, as a "wild beast." The harlot represents the religious character of the world system.

It is the rule of the beast in chapter xiii., and it is in that connection that the 144,000 are brought in; they are bought out of it. Like Daniel and his companions, these refuse to be defiled by the king's meat, they keep themselves pure.

The wine of the wrath of God is poured out for those who have the mark of the beast; it is without mixture; it is in contrast to the wine of her fornication. Their torment is witnessed by the holy angels and by the Lamb. The thought of the Lamb is connected with earth; they are not tormented in heaven. "Here is the patience of the saints."

Verse 13 is one of the most difficult in scripture. It shews us the moment when there will no longer be death under persecution for God's sake. Those who "die in the Lord" are



martyrs; the alternative had been placed before them of receiving the mark of the beast or of martyrdom, and they had chosen death for the Lord's sake, and now they are blessed for ever. "In the Lord" is in contrast to the sphere of the beast's rule. They had come under the sway of the Lord, and had died for His sake, and from henceforth they were blessed. It is a special character of death that is contemplated here. No doubt many a soul may anticipate it in battling against the world system even to-day, and in that way come under the blessing. Their epitaph is given by the Spirit in Hebrews xi. 38, "Of whom the world was not worthy."

# THE UNVEILING.

(Continued.)

(REV. XIV. 14; XV. 1-8.)

THE earth has been given a long period of probation, but here we see the final issue of it; the harvest of the earth has come; it is fully ripe, dried up, and only ready for the reaper. There is a distinction between the harvest (ver. 15) and the vintage. (Vers. 18, 19.) A harvest has a discriminating character: "gather the wheat into my garner," but the tares are gathered together into bundles to be burnt. With the vintage it is different: it is pure judgment there, and all is pressed into the winepress. You cannot, of course, eliminate the thought of judgment from the harvest, the whole earth comes under it; the apostate nations will all come into this reaping. The vintage is a more limited idea, and refers more to Israel; the winepress is trodden "without the city." The vine refers strictly to Israel.

The Lord uses discrimination in regard to the harvest, and all the good is gathered up to Him, and the bad is left for judgment. Then the angels come forward according to the Lord's own shewing, and the scene is cleared of all that offends. What the Lord reaps, He reaps for His own pleasure. There can be no contesting the point that the moment of harvest has arrived, for the harvest is dried; that is evident to all. The Lord does not come in in judgment before the time, but when He does thrust in His

sharp sickle it is evident that the harvest is fully ripe. It is not till the harvest is fully ripe that the true character of the grain is exposed; the fruit of the earth looks fair enough to-day, and it is impossible for us often to discriminate. The church cannot be trusted with fire; it cannot bring in the test; all we can do is to purge ourselves from the evil. The church of Rome tried to discriminate, but that is the work of the Lord alone; He knows them that are His. If we tried to separate the tares from the wheat, we should root up the wheat with them; so now we cannot cast out the evil, but we can withdraw ourselves from it and keep ourselves pure. When all is ripe, there will be no doubt as to the harvest.

The winepress is trodden without the city, that is, Jerusalem, and the blood rises throughout *the length of the holy land*. There will be at that very time a great army gathered against the land, so it is "to the horse bridles." The Jews will have been re-gathered to their own land by God's power, but in unbelief, and His judgment falls upon them there. It is outside the city, the very place where our Lord was crucified, and it is only just that it should be so. Governmentally, as in the case of Naboth's vineyard, judgment falls in the very spot where the evil was perpetrated.

Chapter xv. 2-4 shews us what the Lord really gains out of all this. The encouragement is ministered before the detail of the last judgments is taken up. There is a sea of glass mingled with fire, and there are those who stand

upon it, who have the harps of God. These have come out of persecutions and judgment, and they have stood the test for God, and have come to stand upon the sea of glass in holiness, as the result of His ways with them—“righteous and true are thy ways, O King of nations.” The harps of God present the psalm character of things; they are the summary of what He has led them through. Every believer ought to have his own book of psalms (as the result of his own experience with God), so that he may sing them to the music of God’s harps. Here they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. Both songs are of victory; they shew how God’s rights are vindicated as to the earth. Moses heralds the victory, but the song of the Lamb would contain the record of what has led up to victory—the path of weakness and shame. It is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, but He does it in going right down into death, having borne the whole judgment of sin. Everything has been fully exposed, and all has been met in the sacrifice of God’s Lamb; God’s victory is complete.

It goes on to say, “thy righteousnesses are made manifest,” they have come into public view; it is no longer righteousness imputed, but all is in full public view; He is vindicated in regard to His saints.

# THE UNVEILING.

(Continued.)

(REV. XV. 5 AND XVI.)

WE must connect verse 1 of chapter xv., "in them is filled up [lit. completed] the wrath of God," with chapter xvi. As regards men, these vials complete the outpouring of God's wrath on the apostate earth. There is a similarity between these judgments and those which fell upon Egypt. In Egypt there arose another king "which knew not Joseph," and he refused the measure of truth which had come into Egypt with Joseph, and persecuted God's people with whom it was found; but in the end the apostate land comes under God's judgment, and His people are delivered out of it. There are some here who are delivered out of the apostate earth, and in chapter xv. 3 they are found singing the song of Moses, it was the song of victory over Pharaoh and his host, as in Exodus xv. How marvellous is the unity of scripture in recording the principles of God's ways—thousands of years before they could anticipate the climax of God's ways with men in unsparing judgment upon the rebellious, and the deliverance of what was for Himself.

Verse 5 speaks of the "tabernacle of witness;" it is the witness that He must reign—it is our testimony to-day. God will put forth His judgments in order that Christ may get His place. God's testimony has never altered. Before any king had appeared in Israel, Hannah can anticipate in faith the day of Christ: "The

adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto *his king*, and exalt the horn of his anointed." We recognise Him to-day as King—*God's king*; it is our joy and boast that He is this, though we know our own relationship to Him in a much nearer degree.

The testimony is treasured in the temple; it is preserved there; just as in the days of Athaliah, the king's son was hid in the house of God. When he is brought forth from his hiding-place and crowned, the cry of "treason" goes forth; our testimony is antagonistic to this world system, and though we are called upon to be subject to rulers as a principle, yet we bow to another King.

These judgments come in preparatory to the coming of Christ into manifestation, that He may take up His inheritance. Those who stand upon the sea of glass are in heaven, but their testimony was rendered on earth, and it was upon earth they suffered.

In verse 8 we find the temple filled with smoke—it was the smoke of His nostrils, that which spoke of judgment. The fury of heaven was at work to execute judgment. The plagues are limited to seven, for in them is completed the wrath of God; it is a complete number. They take in a wider area than the trumpets, involving the whole habitable earth. There were ten plagues on Egypt, but that is the

number of responsibility; they were anticipative judgments; here they are final and completed. To own the sovereignty of the beast is the betrayal of Christ, and the judgment here falls largely on those who have the mark of the beast.

The first vial is poured out on the earth, the ordered scene; the second, on the sea. The sea presents the ungoverned nations. The third, upon the rivers and fountains of waters; these present the sources from which man receives his sustenance. It is an awful expression with regard to the second vial (ver. 3), "it became as the blood of a dead man." It is doubly dead, as if they were sunk in some terrible spiritual apostasy.

In the case of the third vial the judgment falls upon what is *God-given*—"fountains of waters"—sources of refreshment for men which hitherto had been preserved to them, but now they are turned into blood. In Egypt when God turned the waters into blood we read that they dug round about to get water; there was an effort made to gain what would assuage their thirst.

Men will not *see* the angels who bring in these plagues; they are providential; that is the force of the symbol of an "angel." Men will think that they have got everything just as they wish it, but at that very moment God's angel will come in and touch the spring of their earthly resources, and all will go wrong. Probably they will reason it out, and try to explain it away: they will have no key to the working of the angel behind what is apparent: there will be the endeavour to set

aside the judgment. The work of the heavenly man to-day is to preserve the wells and fountains of water; we see it set forth in Isaac. He dug the wells, but the Philistines filled them up with earth—with human principles. God always keeps the fountains in His own hand.

Then the angel of the waters says, "Thou art righteous, who art, and wast, the holy one." And the altar is in accord with it: "Even so, Lord God Almighty." The altar is the place of God's holy judgment in the death of Christ, and God is saluted as "the holy one" (see New Trans.) because He has so judged; everything is brought into accord with the judgment there expressed.

Then the fourth vial is poured out upon the sun, which sets forth the dominant ruling power of the earth. When man gets arbitrary rule it is simply fearful for the subjects; only God Himself can have despotic rule, because He is good in an absolute way. With man, the rule of a despot becomes as burning fire, and men are "scorched with heat." So here, power is given to this despot to scorch men with fire, and the result is not that they turn to God in repentance, but that they blaspheme His name. The work of repentance makes room for the glory of God, but they repent not, and the result is blasphemy.

Then the fifth vial is poured out upon the seat of the beast, and the result is darkness, moral darkness comes upon them. That, too, suggests the plague of Egypt; there was darkness which might be felt in all the land. They come under blinding, darkening influences, and they blas-



pheme the God of heaven. They do not mark the judgment of their own sins, but they blame God for them.

The sixth seal is very important; verse 16 speaks of "Armageddon," the place to which the rebellious nations will be gathered in the final war against God, but verse 15 brings in a parenthetical exhortation, to which we do well to take heed: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." The voice of Christ comes to us in view of what is unfolded in connection with this sixth plague. What will then come out full-blown is working even now.

Here we find a trinity of evil working against God, and proceeding from it are three evil spirits who will enter into the kings of the earth, and energise them for the final apostasy from God. They are gathered to the battle of the great day of God Almighty; they do not measure or understand the forces which are drawing them on to perdition; they will be inflated by the glory of this world, and the desire for dominion, and they will go up to war against God. Armageddon is the final testing of the armaments and powers of the world; all man's prowess is brought against heaven. The place is the valley of Megiddo, not far from Jerusalem; God will allow these spirits to lead all the armies of men to converge at that one point. It is foreshadowed in the song of Deborah and Barak. Directly God removes His hand there will be war on the earth. The detail of this battle is given us in

the next chapter, but here we see the direction of it. The prelude to it is the breaking up of the great river Euphrates; it is the God-given barrier between the coloured races and the white; but the barrier is broken down, and Armageddon is the result. We can read the possibilities of such an event even to-day, but then the yellow races will overflow all the earth. Jerusalem will be the great point of attack and hatred, but God will crush them in a moment, and will destroy them with the breath of His nostrils.

We can sing with Deborah and Barak, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." "And the land had rest" is what follows; so here the land has rest for a thousand years. The destruction of the kings of the earth means the closing up of this world's glory for ever, but if we are caught by it the result is we lose our garments and they see our shame. The Lord Himself gives us the warning. The heart that is watching for Him will keep its garment, and will be pronounced *blessed!*

# THE UNVEILING.

(Continued.)

(REVELATION XVII., XVIII.)

THESE two chapters present to us the judgment of the apostate system of Christendom. It comes before us under two symbols: a woman and a harlot. As the woman and city, it comes out as the rival of the heavenly city for which we look; and as the harlot, it is as the rival of the bride of Christ. If Babylon is to the fore, the church will be found in rejection and suffering; when one is in the ascendant, the other is down, as the translation of the old Latin hymn has it:

“And Sion in her anguish  
With Babylon must cope.”

Babylon has all the externals of religion; she is decked (*marg. gilded*) “with gold and precious stones and pearls” (chap. xvii. 4), and these things, too (chap. xviii. 12), form part of her merchandise, but her heart is entirely apostate. This is the awful end of that which outwardly has borne the name of Christ; it is “abomination” in every principle of it. Yet it is only the saints who have their eyes opened to her true character. It is “mystery” because, except to those whose eyes have been enlightened, there is no knowledge of her true condition. The name Babylon takes us back to the tower of Babel and the assumption of man: “let us make us a name,” doubtless in the attempt, though divinely frustrated, to establish communication with the powers of evil in heavenly places. It is the first utterance of man’s pride, and his system

probably is built up on that. Then when we come on to Achan, we find that it has developed a certain glory of its own ; it has its own garment, a goodly Babylonish garment. Later on, with Nebuchadnezzar, we find the glory of God-given empire dissociated from the Giver, and attached to himself, and the moment that is so, he is driven out and becomes as a beast. It is only a step further in the apostasy when Belshazzar takes the holy vessels of God's house and prostitutes them to the use of his idols ; then the writing appears on the wall, and God sums up the whole system ; it is weighed in the balances and found wanting. So in the future, the writing on the forehead of the whore does not become apparent until she takes up the place openly of worshipping the man of sin. When the religious character of her apostasy is manifest, then her judgment falls.

In verse 8 we see the beast "that was, and is not, and shall be present" (lit.). It is the new and Satanic form of the great world-empire Rome. It corresponds to the fourth beast in Daniel. It was, and just now "is not," but it is coming up from the pit under a new and Satanic form, for its revived form will be Satanic in its character. This great world-empire, to which all will be compelled to bow in allegiance, will have its birth from the abyss, and all men will wonder at this marvellous beast. In Daniel it speaks of his "wearing out" the saints of the Most High and of his thinking to change times and laws which are given into his hand. There was a foretaste of that in the last century, when during

the French Revolution they sought to do this, in order to blot out, if they could, all memory of God. It did not take long to incorporate the heathen temples of ancient Rome into Christendom, and they will very rapidly be transferred back again to their old use when the apostasy is ripe. Only a century ago "Notre Dame" became a heathen temple in a few moments, with the worship of humanity under the figure of a woman, and that may soon recur.

The "seven heads" identify this city with Rome, though both Constantinople and Jerusalem are also built upon seven mountains; but at the time this was written it could only be referred to Rome. It is not Rome as a city, but in its principles; and it is only in rigid separation from the whole system that there is safety for any of us. The same principles may be found in the plainest meeting-room as in the grandest cathedral.

Then there are "seven kings": seven powers; these are generally referred to the forms of government which existed under the Roman Empire. The sixth, which was in being at the time this book was written, was that of the Cæsars. There had been other forms of government in Rome previous to this—Consuls and Tribunes, etc.—and there has been a seventh power, some particular form of empire which has come in between the time of the Cæsars and the last Satanic form of the empire under the beast, which is yet to come. God allowed a very peculiar condition of things to come to light during the last century; in His mercy He stepped in and cut it short, but not before there

had become apparent many of the principles which mark Babylon. Then out of the awful condition of things resulting from the French Revolution there sprang up a man who was the terror of the whole earth. The whole Roman Empire lay at his feet, and his son was named "King of Rome"; this man laid claim to the earth. Now the eighth king is "of the seventh," that is, he has the same character, but he goes into perdition; he entered upon a condition of perishing.

Then there are ten horns, ten kingdoms which cannot be identified as yet; they will band together to one end to make war against the Lamb. Then we get the vindication of the only Lord-Emperor, and of those who are with Him, the saints of to-day, then to come forth in His manifested power. When Christ brings into play the forces of His empire, He will make short work of this world. The One sitting in the heavens will laugh at all the armaments of earth; they will be powerless in His presence. The blinding power of the beast will lead men to make war with the Lamb, but though when here He "opened not his mouth," in that day He will come forth, and they will be consumed by the breath of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His presence. The Spirit marks out with delight the character of those who are with the great Lord-Emperor—Christ; they are "called, and chosen, and faithful." They are called by the gospel, and they are chosen of God, and they are faithful in their allegiance to Christ.

At the end we find the despoiling of Babylon

by the very powers upon which she relies. She has obtained very nearly universal rule through them, but they with the beast cast her off, and turn and rend her, for "God has given to their hearts to do his mind, and to do one mind." Unanimity came out at Babel, and so here at the close they act in unity in the despoiling of the harlot. They make her "desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire"; it shews how the great professing system will be despoiled of all its riches and endowments and emoluments; she will be made naked and bare, and then the judgment of God will fall upon her. She was before pictured in Jezebel, who was eaten of dogs; so here the nations are seen as eating the flesh of the false woman. The principle of the harlot is to get safety and grandeur by alliance with this great world power. It is the final form of the union of church and state. The false church can make union with the world, but that would be impossible for the true church, for those composing it are "called, and chosen, and faithful." Satan is seducing the church to-day from its allegiance to Christ, but he gains no entrance with the true saints of God.

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In chapter xviii. another "great angel" appears from heaven; no doubt it is Christ under this form. His glory outshines the glory of Babylon and the earth is "lightened" with it. Babylon receives her true name, she has become "the habitation of demons, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful

bird." All that is foul and unclean finds a refuge in her, and the voice falls from heaven,

**"Come out of her, my people."**

There is to be no dallying with her, no parleying with her sin, but the complete and final break from her; it is not fitting that they should be found in her. It is remarkable how largely the question of gain is involved here; it is a question of commerce and trade. The false system has used the truth of Christianity as a means to increase its wealth. The missionary has often paved the way for the trader, and has been the means of opening up fresh lands and annexing them. It has all tended to the aggrandisement of the one who says in her heart, "I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow"—but the end of it is that that great city is thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

(CHAP. XIX.)

THE fall of Babylon brings in the triumph song of heaven; it is the occasion of joy to the redeemed in heaven; there is blessing there, but on earth there is wailing. Up till now Babylon had been in the ascendant and Jerusalem in rejection with her heavenly Lord and Master, but now the true bride and the true city come into view, and the false bride and the false city are judged. It is remarkable that heaven is in view in the judgment of Babylon. In Genesis xi.



we read that their desire in the building of the tower of Babel is to reach unto heaven; that was their goal then, and here it says of Babylon that "her sins are *joined together* [lit.] unto heaven"—they had reached the consummation of their pride, but by sins piled together: it shews the awful accumulation of evil. In chapter xviii. 22 there is the summing up of all that marks Babylon, its art, its joy, its light and its labour and commerce. It comes to nothing and is found "no more at all;" the whole system, permeated with evil, is built up on a false glory. When God brings in His world system it will owe nothing whatever to this; they will have no principle in common; the removal of Babylon just makes room for the introduction of God's Lamb and God's city.

The call is not only upon heaven to rejoice, but on the saints and apostles and prophets; the founders of God's city are called upon to rejoice at the downfall of the false city. The holy apostles and prophets have their place in the foundation of God's city. Paul and John both lived to see the ruin of what was outward here; Paul could say, "all they in Asia have forsaken me," and John could write of "many anti-christs"; but here God calls on them to rejoice in the destruction of all that is false, He has avenged them on her. The "Alleluia" is the recognition of God's glory claiming the whole earth, and we can utter it anticipatively even to-day as refusing the glory of man and his system. Very much that is mentioned in this chapter as found in Babylon is what was proper

to Solomon's reign of glory, but the difference is that here it is all divorced from God and made to subserve the glory of man. The same principle is seen with the "elder son" in Luke xv., "thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with *my* friends."

The twenty-four elders are kept in view during all the judgments, but after this they are mentioned no more; they disappear as such, and take another character, partly merging in the bride. There is universal rejoicing, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and the marriage of the Lamb has come. Man's evil has been directed against God and heaven, but God judges His enemy; He has borne long with evil, but the judgment falls surely at the end. All that was foreshadowed in the Old Testament finds its fulfilment here; the fact that God would take His great power and would reign was the burden of prophetic scripture, and here we see it accomplished; He has taken His kingly power and He reigns. Strange that men take so little account of His omnipotence to-day. It was different in the days of the early kings of Israel; in the sense of His omnipotence, their resource in times of difficulty was *prayer*.

The marriage of the Lamb follows in natural sequence on the taking of His kingly power; He has displayed that power in thrusting away the false bride, and what follows immediately is the marriage of the true bride. On her part she makes herself ready and there is the divine answer to her state in that she is arrayed in

pure, bright linen, the righteousnesses of the saints. *She* makes herself ready, but the fine linen is "granted" her. Like the wise woman in Proverbs, she has had the interests of her husband before her, and she has prepared herself for his pleasure. There must be that which is fitting for the eye of the King, "the king's daughter is all glorious within"—that is in the holy courts: she is glorious in the royal palace, and therefore is fitted to be united to Him. She is clothed in raiment of needlework—it is the outcome of patience; there is nothing heroic about it, but there is the result of quiet, patient fulfilling of righteousness. It is the carrying out of what is within your reach, because Christ is hidden within the heart; He is enshrined in the affections. The bride is a "symbol," it comprises all the saints of to-day. Needlework is accomplished stitch by stitch, but all will come under the eye of the King; it is all wrought for Him. The vindication of her course is that she is arrayed in her work; she is seen in her true character, clothed in pure linen. The use of the plural in Hebrew is to convey an abstract idea; so here "righteousnesses"—it is something practical and positive. The relationship of the bride to the *Lamb* is the prominent thought here; it does not say the bride of Christ, but of the Lamb; she is His consort as having taken up the kingdoms of the earth. The Lamb is the One who by suffering reaches the place of empire, and the bride shares with Him in that place.

# THE UNVEILING.

(Continued.)

(REVELATION XIX. 11-21.)

THIS scripture brings before us what the Epistle to Titus speaks of as "the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." All that intervenes between chapter iv. and here is what takes place between the rapture of the saints and the appearing of Christ for judgment. The end of verse 10 presents the "testimony of Jesus;" that closes one section, and verse 11 opens up another. The kingdoms of the world had once been proffered to Christ apart from redemption, and He refused them; but here He claims them. Heaven itself is opened; His appearing takes place. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians take up the same ground; the first gives the rapture, the second the appearing of Christ. Here He comes with the armies of heaven, His holy ones. The manner of His warfare is that "in righteousness doth he judge and make war;" that could not be true of any human warfare: this "righteous" war proceeds from heaven. He appears on a "white horse," it suggests triumphant power; the bases of His kingdom are all righteous, and the One sitting upon the white horse is called "Faithful and True;" that has reference to His pathway here, and in pursuance of it He now comes to make war in righteousness. His eyes are as a flame of fire; He comes forth in holy judgment, and on His head are many diadems; He is the Lord of all realms, the true "Emperor."

Yet with it all He carries a name which "no one knows but himself," that shews the inscrutability of His Person as divine. No mortal will ever know fully what is hidden in the mystery of His Person, "no man knoweth the Son." He is divine, and as such inscrutable, but we can know Him to the full as revealed in manhood.

He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood; that would seem to refer to His having trodden the winepress alone, as we see from the prophets (Isa. lxxv.)—it is unmitigated judgment, not atonement. In chapter xiv. we have the same thought, but there it has the Jews rather in view, and the blood covers the space of the holy land. In God's government He covers with blood to the horse bridles the land which had received the blood of Christ. Then His name is called "The Word of God;" God putting Himself in manifestation is the Word of God; it is in moral manifestation in the One who is Faithful and True. The Word is what is expressed; it is God expressed; it is quite distinct from that personal name which is known only to Himself. God is a God of judgment, and He is here seen presenting God as such in the execution of judgment in righteousness. To-day what marks the saints of God is endurance; they abide under it; they do not interfere, but by-and-by they will cry for judgment, "How long, O Lord?" and the answer will be that He will come forth and the armies of heaven will follow Him. Their being clothed in "white linen" would seem to identify them with the bride of the Lamb, but would doubtless include all the heavenly saints. As

partaking with Him they are marked by holiness.

Here Christ is seen as coming forth with a sharp two-edged sword going forth from His mouth, and with eyes as a flame of fire; to-day we know Him in grace and as revealing God in grace, but He has to make God known in the character also of judging unsparingly all that is irreconcilable. Then in verse 16 we get another name, "King of kings and Lord of lords;" it is written upon His vesture and thus connects it with the fact of His taking up His empire by judgment. Satan proposed a short cut to empire when he said, "fall down and worship me," but He will not touch the kingdoms of this world apart from redemption. The thigh is the place of power, it is the place where the weapon is carried: "gird thy sword upon thy thigh," and it was in that spot that Jacob became crippled. Here the name of empire, His great name, is found written upon His vesture and upon His thigh; it is His own proper right and title.

Then next we see an "angel standing in the sun;" the sun is the centre of government, the ruling power of the earth; he stands in the central, supreme, ruling power of the earth ready to acclaim the victory of the Lamb. The end of all man's pride and glory is that they furnish carrion for the vultures of the earth: all is destroyed in the wrath of God the Almighty. The spared remnant does not come into view here; they are hidden by God, both the spared remnant from Israel and the spared remnant from the nations. The war is apparently in

the holy land; the battle of Megiddo would serve to shew that; but all the power and chivalry of the nations is gathered there. There is no battle, no conflict; there could be no such thing as war with heaven, they are simply "taken." The beast is taken, and with him the false prophet, and that is their end. On another occasion we read of the "king of the north" coming to his end (Dan. xi. 45): it is so here, and those "taken" are cast alive into the lake of fire; it is a far more awful ending than that of Sennacherib's army, where they were "all dead corpses." If God appoints the supper of the great God, He will not fail to provide for it. In the Old Testament we read of two men who were taken alive into heaven; here we find two taken alive into hell, that is the end of man's glory. Judges v., which prefigures this battle, closes with "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." That is effected here; this world's glory has passed away for ever, and "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. xiii. 43.) All must make way for the kingdom and glory of Christ.

## “EVEN SO.”

LORD JESUS, come ! Thy saints for Thee are waiting  
To see Thy face and be with Thee at home,  
E'en now, our endless bliss anticipating,  
With all our hearts we say, “ Lord Jesus, come.”

Lord Jesus, come ! Our hearts for Thee are longing  
To share Thy joy in those bright courts above,  
Where Thou wilt have Thy saints around Thee thronging,  
In all the blessed fulness of Thy love.

Lord Jesus, come ! With hearts and voices blending,  
Soon shall we praise Thee in Thy Father's home,  
*Soon* shall we sing the “ new song,” never ending,  
But *now* we sing to Thee, “ Lord Jesus, come.”

*Tunbridge Wells.*

A. P. G.



## THE UNVEILING.

(*Continued.*)

(REV. XX.)

THIS chapter gives us the closing scenes in the great mystery of God ; the final issue of His ways ; it goes on to the end of verse 8 of the next chapter. Then from chapter xxi. 9 we get a full length portrait of the bride, the Lamb's wife. In chapter xx. we get compressed all the stupendous judgments with which God will sweep the earth. Judgment is God's *short* work ; had men chronicled it they might have filled half the Bible with the details of the judgment.

It is not till we come to this point that the full titles of Satan are given : see chapters xii. 9 and xx. 2, the dragon, that old serpent, the devil and Satan : it is not till he is judged that God fully describes his character in his



titles. Even in man's courts of judgment, it is not till a prisoner is *convicted* that a full statement of *all* his crimes is told out, and so here, when the judgment of Satan is effected, then all his heinous sins are named. He is the "ancient serpent," the first deceiver, and he is the dragon, it is under that character that he is brought forward in this book; it is his place in the trinity of evil which sets itself against Christ and His kingdom.

It is no question of man being on probation to-day; man has murdered God's Son, and that being so, his history is closed for God. The position of man to-day is that he is *lost*; there is no fresh chance for the world as such. But there is a coming day in which God will again put man under the most favourable conditions possible: Christ will be on the throne, and the sceptre of His kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness; He will govern in equity; but in spite of all that man will not respond to God; the poison of the serpent is never eradicated, and the end of the thousand years' reign of Christ is one great scene of revolt. The nations which receive His messengers pass over into eternal life, and the rest are judged. "Kings" are not named here; in the previous chapter they are specifically mentioned. It is probable that there are kings on earth during the reign of Christ, for He is spoken of as "the prince of the kings of the earth," and they bring their glory and honour to Him. But here it is more a question of the testing of individuals; whole nations come under exposure, not just the kings.

There is a distinction, too, between the bottomless pit and hell. The lake of fire, the second death, Gehenna is *hell* where evil is eternally punished. But the bottomless pit is the abyss where evil is restrained. In the thousand years Satan will be in the abyss, but it is not till the close of them that he is consigned to the lake of fire. In Peter another word is used, Tartarus—that, too, is the abyss; it is the prison house of fallen angels. A seal is set upon Satan in verse 2, it is God's seal.

In this very scene Satan had succeeded in getting the tomb of Jesus sealed with the seal of Cæsar, but here it is that he himself is imprisoned and sealed with the seal of the living God. He comes to his own place, and nothing can break the seal which closes him in. The chain is forged in heaven which alone can bind Satan; it is forged in God's armoury. When the Lord was here He bound him in this sense that he was unable to interrupt His work in enlightening the souls of men; but here it is his final binding.

Verse 3 presents the necessity from the divine standpoint, that he be "loosed for a little season;" it is that the wickedness of man's heart may be fully exposed, that man may have his final testing under him. And then in verse 4 we come to a blessed scene filled by saints of three different characters. First, "thrones, and sitters upon them." In 1 Corinthians vi. 2 we have "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" We have to-day to learn the principles of holy judgment in ourselves,

and those here spoken of are such as have the place of judging because they are in experience ripe for it; they have learnt the principles of God's holy, moral government in themselves. People often make light of divine principles, but they are eternal in character, they are the bases of divine order and holy judgment.

Then secondly there follows: "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus;" they come probably under the guillotine for the word of God. And thirdly, there were such as had stood faithful here, but did not die, and they come into the power and good of resurrection, and get their part in heavenly blessing. One can well understand what a great comfort such a scripture as this may prove to the faithful in that day, just as the godly remnant will rejoice in the psalms. How greatly impressed Cyrus must have been with the fact that a prophecy had been given as to him two hundred years before his very birth. In chapter xi. the two witnesses are slain, but God revives them and they are recalled to heaven; there is no more martyrdom after that point; the roll of martyrs is closed up there, and the Spirit announces it; there is nothing but blessedness after it; "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." (Chap. xiv. 13.)

It is wonderful grace on the part of God that He should give to this earth a thousand years of the most beneficent rule that can be conceived, and with evil chained. It is the true reign of the King of Peace; Christ takes the place of the

true Solomon, Son of David and King of Peace; He brings in rest. It is the completion of God's ways with earth; it is not a perfect state, for death is not absolutely set aside, and evil, though chained, is not finally abolished; but righteousness will rule, and all will be blessedness. In Ezekiel we still read that a priest was not to "defile himself for the dead," shewing that men *will* die, but God brings in again the blessing of the patriarchal days, and they live and reign with Christ a thousand years, and death does not terminate their days as with the patriarchs, they "live" with Christ. Death cuts off the wicked even in the millennium.

Verse 6 is the substantiating of chapter i., "a kingdom, priests to his God;" that gives the character of what God secures for Himself in this book. He sets out to secure from man a kingdom of priests, and here He has got it. It is what was set forth in the burning bush. That was a picture of resurrection, and of resurrection effected: God secures for Himself a kingdom of priests, which was His original intention as to man. Priesthood brings in the thought of response to God.

# THE UNVEILING.

(Continued.)

(REVELATION XX. 11-15.)

THE scene portrayed for us from verse 11 onwards is evidently after the millennial reign of Christ; it shews the doom of those who have not bowed to Him; it is the resurrection to damnation. Christ has acquired the right to raise all men, but some are raised to life, and some to damnation.

Verse 11 presents a scene in which it is impossible for flesh to stand: all natural support is gone, and all natural blessedness, and the flesh has nothing left on which to lean. It is a "great" throne, because of the immensity of what it affects, and it is "white"—glistening, with all the brilliancy of holiness. The dead, small and great, stand "before the throne" (New Trans.); God's judgment was declared once and for all in the cross of Christ; He touches judgment no more, but Christ becomes the executor of all. None will escape His judgment: He judges all, "great and small;" all must give an account to God, from the beggar on the dunghill to the greatest potentate. Judgment here is final, and there are two witnesses to its equity—the "book" and the "books." The books contain the records of what each has done in the flesh, and every man is judged according to his works. No one will say before the great white throne that he is suffering for Adam's sin; he will be judged for his own works, not Adam's. But then there is further witness, the book of life

will be opened and search will be made in it to see if the name be there; but that not being so, their doom is final, they are consigned to the lake of fire. Death and hell—hades—the grave, find their place in the lake of fire; they have delivered up the dead which were in them, and they cease to exist: all that is in them has been emptied into hell. The sea also has delivered up the dead which were in it, and in the next chapter we read that there is “no more sea.” Scripture dwells very little on this scene, terrible to flesh; it is the end of all self-will and self-importance. Unbelief receives its condemnation already, but the ground of final judgment is a man’s works. A lake gives the idea that evil will be for ever circumscribed: it is shut in all round; lawlessness will be for ever bound and limited, hell was prepared for the devil and his angels; *men* only go there when they have finally refused heaven. It is only according to God’s sovereignty in mercy that any of us are saved from hell.

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Chapter **xxi.** 1-4 speaks of the eternal state: it is the unchanging state. Very little is told us as to it, for we shall need the education of the reign of Christ to fit us for the full appreciation of a state which is morally unchanging, because morally perfect. There is a new heaven and a new earth; in one sense it will still be this earth, but absolutely changed—a new earth, yet it will retain its identity. God had made the heavens and the earth at the beginning, but the earth was lost to heaven; here we see the great triumph of God: He recovers all to Himself;

He gets a new heaven and a new earth, and in them He will be "all in all." He is supreme.

Then John beholds the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The marriage of the Lamb had taken place a thousand years before, but the expression here would indicate that there is no waning in the full joy of the nuptial day; the bride is still presented in the glory of her first love: there is no trace of decay.

In the days of the flood the earth was poised "out of the water and in the water," and God submerged it under the water and it was destroyed. But now the earth is poised in regard of fire, and the whole will be molten together, and God will evolve a new heavens and a new earth out of what was. There will be "no more sea;" probably that means that there will be no division between nations, no insularity, no separation. All will be men; it will not be so much a question of nations as of men. Men will live under different conditions in that day: unchanging conditions, restful conditions.

"Coming down out of heaven" has a moral force; it is not merely that John saw it descending out of heaven to a lower plane, but that as coming down out of heaven it continues to shed its beneficent influence on all that is below. It has that character. In verse 10 it is said of "the holy city, Jerusalem," that John beholds it "coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God." She is the vessel through whom the grace of heaven is con-

tinually descending upon the earth below, and this place is hers for ever; she bears that character for ever, receiving nothing from earth, but drawing all her resources from heaven. Heaven is her proper sphere, and she will dispense blessing upon earth for ever.

Verse 3 states that "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them"—that refers, I suppose, to the church as the heavenly city. It does not say it is on earth, but that it is "with men." That is what God had before Him in the earthly tabernacle that Moses built. Moses actually saw this in pattern, but here we come to the fulness of it. God here secures His original thought, and His dwelling is with *men*; it is God and men; there is no intermediary, no king, no emperor, but only GOD. "That God may be all in all." (1 Cor. xv. 28.) The Son Himself will deliver up the mediatorial kingdom that God may be eternally supreme. So in the beginning, it is "God" (Gen. i. 1), and in the end it is "God."

Even to-day God secures under His eye a moral scene which is in accord with the actual scene which He will yet display to His eternal glory, and this is morally greater even than the display, for to-day all is contrary to His people, but then all will be for them. No curse, no pain, no death, no sorrow, and God will wipe away all tears for ever. The things of responsibility will all pass away, and all will rest for ever on the blessedness of God's sovereignty. From verse 9 on we get details of the glorious position which the church will have during the thousand



years of the reign of Christ, but from verses 5 to 8 man's responsibility is filled up, and we have God's last word to men. Henceforth all rests on His sovereign power.

(REV. XXI.)

FROM chapter xvii. 1 down to chapter xxi. 4 we get a consecutive line of prophecy going on beyond the end, and carrying us on in the vision of John to the enduring state which lies beyond and outside the possibility of death or sin or change. That is God's rest—the eternal state. We are but little constituted now to take in the truth as to that; it has often been said that we shall need the education of the world to come to fit us for it.

Verses 4 to 8 give us God's last word after His last act; it is God's last invitation and last warning to men. We come to the "fountain of the water of life," that is not only to the water, but to the Source of it, God Himself. And on the other hand, there is the lake of fire, in which all that are found irreconcilable will find their part. The one expresses the measure of God's love; the other the inflexibility of God's righteousness. From verse 9 onwards we get the full account of the millennial state—the thousand years' reign of Christ. There will be "nations" in the millennium; but Christ will hold all for God during that period. It is no question of Christ reigning in the eternal state; He will have handed over the kingdom then that "God may be all in all." He takes up the position of Son, subject to God.

Verse 6, "It is done"; that is God's answer to the cry of Christ on the cross. All was morally

effected there on the cross, but here we get God's public answer to it. Many have expressed difficulty as to the divisions of the book at this point ; but it arises from not taking account of the fact that John gets a consecutive vision of what is to come from chapter xvii. down to chapter xxi. 4 ; but that then the same angel who has shewn him the harlot, takes him up into a high mountain that he may contemplate the bride, of whom the harlot had been the rival. The holy city is "new" here in the sense of being absolutely so, not merely *renewed*: it is of wholly new origin. It is a question then not simply of Jew and Gentile, but of God and *men*; God will dwell with men, and the city will be light for men. The tabernacle of God will be with men, and will take the place of Jerusalem below. The bride, the church in that aspect, becomes the dwelling place of God eternally, answering to what we find in Ephesians iii., "Glory to God in the church in Christ Jesus throughout all ages" —(lit.) "to all the generations of the age of the ages." It is the fullest expression we can get of what is eternal, yet in infinite variety.

In chapter xvii. 1 the apostle is carried in spirit into the wilderness, but in chapter xxi. 10 he is carried away in spirit to a great mountain ; there is an implied contrast in the two points of view. A wilderness is a desolation, what man has made of this world ; but the mountain implies a point of vantage ; it is lifted above man's sphere and mind, to yield from the divine standpoint a view of the divinely created vessel of the glory of God. In Solomon's Song, chap. iv., the

Bridegroom invites His spouse to "look from the top of Shenir and Hermon." There is the consciousness of divine associations and relationship, and hence she can take a wide view of divine purpose and work. We never could see the church as the bride of Christ unless we see it from the divine standpoint; it is only from that point of view that we can recognise it as one whole—"the great city, the holy Jerusalem." As a responsible body upon earth it has utterly failed, and there is nothing to look upon but a ruin; but the divine work does not fail, and God accomplishes His purpose and secures a vessel of light for Himself. Think what a stand-by the light of God's purpose was to the faithful heart even in the Dark Ages; it was the heart hope of such, an outlet in the midst of the pressure and darkness of those days. Though they recognised that Zion and Babylon were in conflict then, yet the end was assured victory. When Babylon finds her place in the pit, then we get the bride brought into display. Moses got the pattern in the mount, before ever there was apostasy in Israel, and so we, having the complete plan brought before us here, may feel perfectly certain that God will carry into effect all that He has planned for His own glory. The city is being built up by the word of His grace; the moral elements which go to form it are set forth in material symbols, but the city is, in principle, being formed to-day in the hearts of God's saints. Every symbol used here sets forth a moral reality, and while this chapter gives us the fulness of display, yet each trait was first found

in our Lord Jesus Christ down here, and is still maintained in the church now by the Holy Spirit. It was inherent in Him; it is *new* in us by the work of the Spirit, and is maintained by the Spirit in the church now. He is here to reproduce Christ in the saints under the eye of God. Once you get the divine standpoint, and see God's end in the church, your whole course here will be altered. Everything henceforth must be in accord with the greatness of God's purpose.

The city is heavenly and of God; it descends out of heaven, and from God, and it is a competent vessel to bear the glory of God. His glory was committed to the earthly order in Israel, but Ichabod was written against it, and God will never again commit His glory to any failing, earthly system. He builds up *in* Christ, and *of* Christ, a capable vessel for His glory—heavenly in character and origin. God's glory is the standard to-day; as to ourselves, as men in flesh, we all *do* come short of it, but here is something that does not fail, for it is all divinely wrought. The death of Christ has opened the way to the glory of God; redemption is in another order of man altogether, it is in Christ Jesus. There is one Man who is in perfect accord with God, and the Spirit is here working out in the saints a perfect answer to Christ in glory. The full result is seen in the heavenly city. "We exult in hope of the glory of God." While the city gives us one view of the church, it is not all that is true of her: there is a public and a private side of the truth. Revelation gives

us what will be true before men, but there is an inner side connected with her relationship to the Father and the Son. Here all is a question of God and the Lamb; but the church has not only the place of presenting God to men, but has a place before the Father for ever, for the complacency of divine Persons. The thought of the bride is connected with display; she is the consort of the Lamb, that in which He is perfectly displayed. The church becomes the moral luminary of the world to come; it is not simply reflected light (as with the moon), but she becomes in herself, as the vessel of God's glory, a luminary. Even to-day the saints are to shine as luminaries, holding forth the word of life. You can never view the city as incomplete if you view it in the Spirit as John did. Hebrews speaks of our having come to it. All the moral traits of Christ are to-day being wrought out in the christian company, and every saint of God who is a subject of the work of God has his part in that; he may not be up to his privileges, but they are his.

The names written on the gates are those of the twelve tribes of Israel; that shews that the church is the depository of the whole purpose of God both in regard to the church and to Israel. The hope of Israel is cherished in the church. Men say that ten of the tribes are lost; but not so, all the tribes are treasured up before God in the church. In the divine mind all the tribes are there, and the hope of Israel is carried over in the church. Every divine thought is treasured up there: the house and the flock and

Israel are maintained in the church, carried over in her in the ways of God. Abraham's hope is carried over in the church.

(REVELATION XXI. 9-27.)

It is interesting to see that every divine thought is treasured up in the church, as witnessed in the names of the twelve tribes of Israel being written

upon the gates of the holy Jerusalem. The hope of Israel has apparently been set aside, and the nation dispersed, but the nucleus of Israel, the "Israel of God," is found in the church to-day, and what they have in faith is that every promise to Israel will yet be fulfilled. Meanwhile the church is the depository of the hope of Israel.

The question for us is what are the moral realities which are set forth in the symbols we get here. God is already by the Spirit forming the church as the bride of the Lamb: "that now to the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known through the church the all-various wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10), but by-and-by all this will be in display, and the heavenly city will be the vessel of light for the universe. The church is the divinely formed library for the universe; she is that to-day to the principalities and powers; as the woman is subject to man to-day "because of the angels," so they see the answer to God's mind worked out in detail in the church. All that Christ was in word and deed is treasured up there; it is livingly reproduced in the saints; His moral characteristics are reproduced there. First, God secured in Christ the perfect answer to Himself; then when Christ is absent He maintains in the power of His Spirit the reproduction of those moral qualities which so delighted Him in Christ, and thirdly, He will secure that throughout the ages to His glory; there is to be glory to God through the church in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages. In one sense God is building up His city to-day, and yet in

another sense the holy city exists even now morally under God's eye, because He secures in the church now an answer to Christ morally. God secures a vessel great enough to display Christ, but to-day all that is hidden. You could not look at the church to-day to see the city, for outwardly all is in ruin ; it could not be found in any concrete company now, but we look at Christ glorified, we read God's purpose in Him, and we embrace in our affections the whole christian company in which He is set forth.

We have to take up all these figures *morally* ; the walls great and high set forth the bounds of holiness God sets round His people. His saints are brought livingly in touch with Himself, and in that way evil is excluded. If the truth is held merely in terms, there are no walls ; but divine principles, held in living operative affection to Christ, form walls of salvation for us, and there is no entrance for evil. These walls here were of "jasper," setting forth the glory of God ; the church is hedged round about with the glory of God, and that is exclusive of the glory of man. The church has no roots here, it is entirely heavenly in character, and the glory is moral effulgence. In Isaiah lxxv. it says the gates of the earthly city are "praise." The gates are the culminating point : the foundations are the beginning, the basis. Gates in the Old Testament were the place of judgment, now they are turned into the place of praise ; and they are never shut, there is perfect accessibility from every quarter, just as was seen in the Lord Jesus here. But though perfect accessibility is main-



tained yet they are guarded by twelve angels ; there is the perfect administration of grace. Every gate was of one pearl : that speaks of what they are for the heart of Christ, there is beauty in unity. Israel below will derive all her light from Jerusalem above ; the administration of Israel is derived from the church ; hence the deep importance of the ways and principles of God's government having their place in us today. God brings many an object lesson before us ; He teaches us in many ways and by many means, but if we refuse to learn now and profit by them, we lose for ever. Under all God's ways with us there is an underlying principle which is intended to form and influence us for His glory ; He is instructing us in the principles of holy government. The walls are what make a city in the divine thought, and they are the great point of conflict ; their foundations are laid in the word of the apostles ; they bear their names. " He that knoweth God heareth us " ; (1 John iv. 6). All appeal must be to the law and the testimony. We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Then the city is measured with the golden reed ; the idea of measuring has reference to what comes into recognition before God ; it answers to His mind. The requirements of divine glory are met in man in Christ, and we have to refuse everything that is not suitable to the holy glory of God. There can be no display unless Christ is first formed in His saints. John xvii. 22, 23, shews us what underlies all that is to be displayed ; " And the glory which thou

gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." When the saints are "perfected in one," then it is that the world *knows*. It is in virtue of their being formed in divine knowledge that they come out in display: they are perfected in one.

Then the city lieth "foursquare," the length and breadth and height of it are equal. These are *moral* symbols, not material ones. What is set forth in them *has* come out in Christ and *is* here in the Spirit. The city is an actual city, no doubt, but it is not merely material; it is so constituted as to set forth moral realities. The approach of God's saints to men, set forth in length and breadth, must be in moral accord with its height, which is their approach Godward. All is in perfect accord. It was always so in Christ here. Look at Matthew xi.: He turns to heaven and says, "I thank thee, O Father," and then He turns to men and says, "Come unto me." If that is to be seen displayed in the city, it must be inwrought in the church to-day. The thought of the disciples was that foursquare was limited to Israel, but all the Lord's instruction to them is to shew that He takes in all men. There is unreality unless our approach manward is governed by our approach to God. We have to be instructed in divine principles; it is a great point in New Testament teaching. Peter in Acts xi. was on the house-top praying; his approach to God was all right, but as to his

breadth he was all too narrow now for grace. When told to rise, slay and eat, he replied "Not so, Lord." He could not believe that God was approaching *all* men in Christ risen. The vision was granted to him to enlarge him manward; he learns that "he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him." Peter was shewn the plan on which he was to work in Acts x., and in result his name is found in the foundation of the heavenly city.

The measure was according to the measure of a man—that is, of the angel; it is very striking. Angels are the ministers of those about to inherit salvation, and here the walls of the city, which set forth salvation, are measured by an angel. He takes account of what has been effected.

## THE UNVEILING.

(Conclusion.)

(REV. XXI. 18 AND XXII.)

HERE we come to the foundation of God's city, and we find that it is through these moral bases that the light of God is to be radiated through the universe. There are twelve foundations, and each has a peculiar glory of its own; it has its own colour. Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, and we find it here. The shining out in the day of display will be according to the measure in which the saints have been formed in divine affections. Every glory was set forth in Christ as here: there were those who "beheld his glory," and all is still there in Him, and as we appreciate Him we become formed after Him. It is in that way that He secures a place for Himself to-day. When we come to the heavenly city, we find there is "no temple" there for the *city* is the temple; it is all one shrine. Christ has found His place within. The temple is essential to display, but it is growing up to-day. "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." It grows up in the appreciation of Christ, and what is the fruit of affection to Him will never pass away, but will be built into God's city.

Then there are twelve gates, every several gate of one pearl; from every point of approach the city is seen in divine beauty in unity. We have to bear the shame of what has come in in

Christendom, the utter degradation of the divine thought, but we cleave to the light of purpose, we look for the display of perfect *unity* in God's city.

Then the street of the city is of pure gold ; there is holiness and transparency of walk ; all can come out, there is no part dark. It is the dark parts that spoil everything here, that mar the testimony. We ought to be here "not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." In that way there would be an anticipation of the pure and transparent gold.

"And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." The whole city is one shrine ; and the Shekinah, too, is there : "the Lamb is the lamp thereof." There was no natural light in the holiest, and here there is no creation light ; the light is redemption's light, and the medium through which it is diffused is the Lamb. The Lamb is the unfailing lamp of the glory.

There seems to be an additional thought introduced in chapter xxii. 1-5, as we may gather from the introductory words, "And he shewed me," carrying us back to chapter xxi. 9. He is continuing to unfold the thought of the holy city. He shews now the river of the "water of life," that which flows out in living refreshment from the seat of divine power, the throne. It is bright as crystal, and it is in movement. It

seems to set forth the knowledge of God in movement, its outflow in the future day. God will diffuse His knowledge through those who in the power of the Spirit have obtained it down here. He will secure a mighty stream of living grace flowing out from the hearts of His saints. The whole earth will be watered by the knowledge of God.

Then on either side of the river we find what answers to the tree of life in Eden. There is no tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for the whole question has been settled once and for ever in the cross of Christ; but the tree of life is there in its beauteous diversity, yielding its fruit every month. "In the midst of the street of it" seems to convey that it is connected with the walk of the saints; it is purely a moral thought; wherever the river is, the tree is. The fruit is for God, and the leaves for men. It is fruit in diversity, but it is yielded according to some great regulating power, for it is "every month." In the blessing of Joseph monthly fruit is referred to, "the precious things put forth by the moon" (marg. moons, Deut. xxxiii. 14); there is the idea of continuous unfoldings of fruit, but here the tree is inseparably connected with the river, it is on either side of it, and in the midst of the street of it. There is perfect access to it, and its fruitfulness is maintained and ensured in the river of water of life. This would be symbolical of the place the Spirit has in connection with the city in display. In the Acts we find cases in which the Spirit is spoken of sovereignly, "the Spirit suffered them not," &c.,

though even then it would seem to be in connection with His activities through the saints. He is sovereign as a divine Person, but He has a normal way of acting, and that is through and in connection with the saints. In the heavenly city He will still maintain His place in connection with fruit-bearing and healing, and even to-day fruit-bearing Godward and healing and refreshment manward are the result of the activity of the Spirit. So with the tree of life; it is for sustenance; man will never be self-supporting; as we need Christ to-day for support, so will it ever be; He will never cease to be the life and strength of His saints.

There will be no curse in connection with the order of things which centres in the city; there will be an earthly city illumined by the heavenly, drawing all its blessedness from the heavenly. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 1); that will be made good to Israel. The river of life, too, will be available for them, and the tree of life. In Ezekiel xlvii. we are told that the leaves of the tree are for "bruises and sores," that is the earthly side of it, and fish are mentioned in connection with the river, just as in John xxi., where we get the great millennial scene of blessing.

It is a great comfort to see that in that day "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face." Service at this time is extremely restricted; it is limited by what we are, and by what others are; but in that day there will be unrestricted service in the light of His counte-

nance. There will be nothing official about it, but it will be the delight of life to serve Him. We shall be "the Lord's lot"—the true "clergy," and we shall all serve Him. It is wonderful to think that though to-day we have to submit to limitations which God Himself has laid upon us, that in that day we may look for an unrestricted sphere in which to serve Him. To-day it is "let him strive *lawfully*;" there are limits to our service and anything outside those limits is not true service and will receive no reward. The "Lord Christ" is the One who is going to dominate the world to come and we serve *Him*, we see His face. Here it is worshipping service.

His name, too, will be on their foreheads. On earth they had learnt what it was to "suffer as a Christian:" then the name will no longer be one of reproach, but of honour before all, and each will be identified with it.

The words of this book come to us with the authority of the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets—prophecy will soon give place to fact. Blessed are those who treasure these things and to whom the coming Saviour and the resurrection world are present realities. Righteousness and holiness have their abiding place only in that scene. The time is near and the "great gulf fixed" is already in view.

The personal presentation of Himself gives the sense to His saints of the Lord's nearness to them and marks the imminence of His return. In His own blessed Person, too, as Man, He



bridges the gulf of time, and is Himself personally outside it.

Once more the paradise of God comes into view. "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life." Here the need for moral state receives its final emphasis. No cherubim guard the portals against the holiness which is connected with the new man. All that is of the new order will find its place within, all of the old fallen order eternally without. That order began with the lie in Genesis iii. and here in the same connection ("whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," ver. 15) it passes eternally out of sight.

Once more the Lord Jesus identifies Himself to His saints by His personal name: "I, Jesus." He is David's Lord and David's Son—both Root and Offspring, and as the Morning Star He fills henceforth the horizon of the Christian's soul, pledge of the coming day.

And the Spirit and the bride are in full accord in response: there has been the forming and awakening of affection in the saints, and now they stretch forward in heart to Himself.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."