

The Revelation

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Quote: *"Who that knows ecclesiastical history, who that has present acquaintance with souls, is not aware that the saints of God, with ever so little light, have been exceedingly nourished and helped by the Apocalypse; while men of learning have made it as dry as an old almanac?"*

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[Revelation 22](#)**THE REVELATION****Introduction**

That God should have chosen John to be the instrument of communicating the closing volume of the New Testament is worthy of our consideration. It is not a new thing for God thus to set out the strongest contrasts by the same inspired writer. He who was emphatically the apostle of the uncircumcision was the appointed witness of Christ to those who had been Jews. The final and above all the decisive message of grace, which called the Jews outside all earthly associations to Christ in heaven, was given neither by Peter nor by James, and by no other than Paul. So too the witness of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ was, in His mind, if not in man's, the most suited medium for revealing the coming judgments of God. In truth, the moral reason lay in this: that Christ, if rejected as the object of faith, and the only channel of grace, becomes an executor of judgment. This we find formally and doctrinally in his gospel (John 5). And now that grace and truth were about to be utterly set at naught, as He Himself had been before by that which bore His name on the earth, John was more than any other suited to let us see the solemn visions of God avenging the slighted rights of His own Son; and this, first, by providential judgments; lastly, by Christ Himself coming in the personal execution of judgment.

Hence, although there are the most complete contrasts in form, subject, and issues between the gospel and the revelation of John, after all the person of the Lord Jesus is pre-eminently kept before us as the object of God's care and honour in both; and therefore it is that even the souls that could not enter into the main topics of its prophetic visions have always found unspeakable comfort in the various displays of Christ Himself furnished by this book, especially in times of trial, rejection and persecution. Who that knows ecclesiastical history, who that has present acquaintance with souls, is not aware that the saints of God, with ever so little light, have been exceedingly nourished and helped by the Apocalypse; while men of learning have made it as dry as an old almanac?

Rev. 1 - 3**Revelation 1**

It is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him." Even in the gospel, which is so fragrant with His divine love, we have the frequent - not to say constant - admonition of this remarkable position which Christ takes. In short He is carefully regarded as man on earth, as the sent One who lives on account of the Father - in the gospel as a man on earth, in the revelation as a man most truly wherever He may be seen, whether in heaven or on earth. This book then is the revelation of Jesus Christ, "which God gave unto him." In the gospel it is said, God gives Him to have life in Himself. Nothing can more demonstrate how loyally He accepts, and will not speak inconsistently with, the place of man to which He stooped. For in Him was life: yea, He was that eternal life which was with the Father before the worlds were. Nevertheless, having become a man in divine grace, He speaks according to that lowly position which He entered here. In glory it is just the same, as we see in the book before us. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants." It is not now to bring them whether or not servants out of that position or even worse, and entitling them to take the place of children of God. This characterises the gospel, because it distinctively is the revelation of grace and truth in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son. Here it is what God was going to do for His glory as the rejected man. He is going therefore to show unto His "bondmen" - a term that would suit not only Christians now, but those who might be in another relationship after we have been taken away from the world. Hence, evidently, there is a comprehensive term employed with divine wisdom, "to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." It is not to make known what was in Christ before all worlds, but to disclose the great facts in which God was about to maintain the glory of the

First begotten, when He introduced Him into the world. "And he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John."

The angel, it is needless to say, is not without good reason named in relation to the revelations which God was here giving. In the gospel we bear of eternal life in the Son and this in the grace of God given to the believer. There the Holy Ghost was the only one competent to minister and effectuate such grace according to the counsels of God, and in the ordering of His love.

But here we have visions - visions of God's judicial ways - visions of what would call for judgment in the ever growing iniquity of man. He therefore "sent and signified this by his *angel* unto his servant John." It is another and a remarkable difference. In the gospel John may speak, but he speaks as one who had seen the Lord, - as one who could bear his own personal voucher for whatever he utters. He may speak but seldom of himself, and this he does so effectually that there are not wanting those who have questioned whether after all he were "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Undoubtedly the inference is mistaken; still there is no possibility of charging the writer with putting himself forward in the manner in which he has written. This is a very significant circumstance, more particularly as in the epistles, which contemplate the Christian company or a family or a friend, the one aim and effort is to place the children of God in immediate communion through Christ with Himself: an inspired apostle writes it no doubt, and the various members of God's family, as well as the servants of the Lord, are owned in their place. At the same time it is manifestly He who is God and Father instructing, comforting, and admonishing His own.

We have intervention on every side. God gives a revelation of Jesus; and Jesus passes it on to His angel, or rather by His angel to His servant John; and then John at last sends it to other servants. Thus we have all sorts of links in the chain. And why so? For it is somewhat novel, especially in the New Testament. How comes this remarkable introduction of God to Jesus, then from Him through an angel to one servant, who sends to other servants? How is it that we here miss that character of direct dealing with us - that immediateness of address which is found elsewhere? The reason is as solemn as it is instructive. It is implied indeed in the analogy of the Old Testament; for God did not always address His people there. He did originally, as for instance in the ten words, though afterwards in this very particular intervention came in. But habitually God's messengers were sent to Israel, even when prophets were raised up. At first all addressed the people in His name. The word of Jehovah was sent to Jehovah's people. But what an affecting change took place at length! The time soon came when the message was not sent to the people directly. It was given to a chosen witness - no doubt really meant for the people, but delivered to Daniel, and only so.

This prepares us for the true meaning of the remarkable chancre in the Apocalypse as compared with the rest of the New Testament. When the children of Israel had hopelessly betrayed the Lord - when their departure was complete before His eyes - not only in the first rent-off portion, the ten tribes of Israel, but even the remaining two, - when there was a stay and a lengthening of the tranquillity, - when not only Judah, but even the house of David, the anointed king, the last regular link between God and His people, failed, then we find that God addressed not His people, but an only chosen faithful servant as His witness. It was a sure token that all was over for the present, for any immediateness of communion between God and His people. God could no longer recognise them as His own. Applying this to the present time, and our own circumstances, is it not most grave? I do not in the least doubt that God proves Himself faithful in the worst of times. It would be the falsest possible deduction to suppose that Daniel and his three companions, possibly others also, were not personally as pleasant to the Lord as David was. Did He not look with exceeding satisfaction in His grace upon that servant who felt and answered to His own feelings about His people? It was precisely because He did that Daniel received so exceptional an honour. In a certain sense it was better to be a Daniel in the midst of ruin than to have had the best position when times were prosperous, and when things looked fair. It was a greater proof of

fidelity when all was out of course to stand faithful than to be faithful when all things were regular. Thus grace is always equal to every difficulty.

But it is a solemn thing to feel that such a crisis was even then come, as far as regarded the church of God here below. John stands in a position analogous to Daniel; he becomes now the object of the communications of the Lord Jesus, not that which still bore the name of the Lord here below. However the grace of the Lord might act, however He might animate as well as warn, still the address is made directly to His servant John, and not to the church; and even where we have addresses, as we shall find afterwards in the second and third chapters, they are not immediately to the churches, but sent to their *angels*. It is manifest that all carries out the same solemn impression.

John then, as it is said, "testified the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." But this is here restricted: it does not mean the truth in general, nor the gospel in particular, though we cannot doubt that John did preach the gospel, and did nourish the church of God in all His revealed truth; but this is not the subject of the Apocalypse, nor the meaning of our text. All is here limited to what he saw. This is of importance to apprehend the scope of the passage and the character of the book. We may safely strike out the word "*and*," if we respect the best authorities. The meaning then is that John testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. But how are we to describe or understand "the word of God"? Is it any special part, or the word of God as a whole? What exactly is meant by "the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ" in this connection? The answer is given by the last clause when "*and*" is taken away: - the visions that he was going to behold and record in this book - whatsoever things he saw. Thus, besides what the apostle had in his ordinary relation with Christians, and his already lengthened tenure in the service of Christ, he receives now a new character of word and testimony.

Accordingly the apocalyptic visions can be slighted only by ignorant unbelief; for they no less than the gospel or epistles are here styled "the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." They are thus carefully ushered in, but in that prophetic method which was morally fitting, in a series of visions which John saw. This is of so much the greater emphasis, as it is apparently designed in an express manner to counteract the tendency (but too common spite of it) to treat the Apocalypse as if it were of doubtful value and of precarious authority. But no: it is confessed to John by Jesus as the word of God and His own testimony. We know how many scholars have dared to insult the book in their folly, as I think we may say, with the justest rebuke of their offensive language. None the less is it "the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ," even if it consists not of that which ministers directly to the edification of the Christian in his own position, but indirectly as announcing the doom of such as despise God and do their own will in the face of His revelation. Nevertheless it is God's word and Christ's testimony, though as a whole composed of visions.

In order to make this more realised by the believers then or at any other time, be it remarked that we have another word remarkably annexed which lies altogether out of the beaten path of the Lord. May we not presume that it is for the express purpose of graciously encouraging His servants as well as to anticipate the doubts and cavils of unbelief? "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein."

The stated ground that follows is also to be weighed; for it is not, as men often assume, because we are to be in the predicted circumstances, it is not because the Christian or the church must pass through the troubles it describes: not a word to this effect is implied, but a different reason is given. In short, as the book itself afterwards shows that the church will be on high outside the scene of its varied troubles and inflicted judgments, so the motive assigned in the preface is of a strikingly holy nature, adapted to those who walk by faith, not by sight, and free from all selfish considerations - "for the time is at hand." It is not that the time is actually come so that we must go through all or any part; but the time is *at hand*. God therefore writes for our comfort, admonition, and general blessing in whatever way it may be wanted; He takes for granted that we are interested in whatever He has to say to us. "The time is at hand." It is a

false principle therefore that we can only be profited by that which concerns ourselves, and supposes us to be in the actual circumstances described.

Then comes the salutation. Here too all is as peculiar as it is suitable to the book on which we enter: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia." In no other place do we find anything akin to this. We read of the saints in one place or another. A particular assembly, or even the assemblies of a district (Gal. 1), may be addressed. Never but here occurs an address to a certain number of assemblies, particularly one so definite and significant symbolically as seven. Surely something is meant outside the ordinary course of things, where so unexampled a style of address is found. The spiritual usage of *seven* in prophetic scripture cannot be questioned. Nor is it confined to prophecy, for the same force holds good wherever symbol is employed. In typical scripture, as well as in prophecy, seven is the regular known sign of spiritual completeness. Who then but uninstructed minds can doubt that the Lord meant more than the actual assemblies that were addressed in the province of Asia? That letters were written to literal congregations from Ephesus to Laodicea seems to be unquestionable; but I cannot doubt that these were chosen, and the addresses so shaped to them as to bring before those who have ears to hear the complete circle of the Lord's testimony here below as long as there should be anything possessed (responsibly if not really) of a church character. The state of things might be ever so ruined; it might be even gross and false (as much was in several); but still there was an ecclesiastical profession if only for His judgment, which we do not find after Rev. 4. No such condition appears afterwards. The Lord no longer dealt so when this kind of footing vanished for the responsibility of man. In short, as long as church responsibility exists here below, these addresses apply, and no longer.

So says he "To the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come." It is not "from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The salutation is from God in His own being, the ever-existing One, He who is, and who was, and who is to come. This of course connects His present existence with the future as well as the past. "And from the seven Spirits which are before his throne." Here again we find a description of the Holy Ghost decidedly different from what meets us in the New Testament generally. The allusion is clear to Isaiah 11, where the seven-fold power of the Holy Ghost in government is described as connected with the person and for the kingdom of the Messiah. "And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest," etc. This seems taken up here, and applied in a far larger way for purposes suitable to the Apocalyptic prophecy. Indeed the same remark will be found true of all the use that is made of Old Testament citations and allusions in the Apocalypse. Constant reference is made to the law, Psalms, and prophets, but it is never a mere repetition, as the literalists suppose, of what was found there. This would be in effect to deprive ourselves of the Apocalypse, instead of understanding and gathering its peculiar profit. If one identifies the Jerusalem of Isaiah with the New Jerusalem of the Revelation, or the Babylon of Jeremiah to explain the Apocalyptic Babylon, it is clear that one simply loses all the special instruction that God has given us. This is one of the main sources of confusion on the subject of the Apocalypse to this day. At the same time, if we do not start with the Old Testament revelations of Babylon or Jerusalem, or the instruction derived from the prophets generally, we are not prepared for appreciating or even understanding the Apocalypse as a whole. Thus, either to dislocate the New absolutely from the Old, or to see no more than a repetition of the Old in the New, is an almost equal error. There is a divine link in the sense as there was in the Spirit's mind an undistinguished reference; but then the Apocalypse gives it an incomparably larger range, and a more profound character. The Apocalypse looks on things after the Holy Ghost had taken His place in the Christian and in the church on earth - above all, after the Son had appeared, manifested God the Father, and accomplished redemption here below. Hence all the fulness of divine light that had come out in Christ's person and work, as well as by the Spirit in the church of God, is necessary to be taken into account in order to give the Apocalypse its just bearing.

The seven Spirits therefore refer, as I believe, to the Holy Ghost acting in the way of government. It is the fulness of the Holy Ghost's energy as an overruling power. What the application of this may be depends

on the context where it is used. We shall find it in relation to Christ dealing with church matters in Rev. 3; we shall find it in His relation to the earth in Rev. 5: but it is always the fulness of the Spirit in governmental power, and not the same Spirit viewed in His unity forming the church into one body. This we have had already in the Pauline epistles, where the proper sphere of the Christian as a member of Christ's body is treated especially, and indeed only there.

God as such is then introduced in Old Testament style and character, but at the same time applied to New Testament subjects; the Holy Ghost also is similarly brought before us. And so too with our Lord Jesus, as we shall see. Indeed, there is nothing more remarkable, especially when we bear in mind who the writer is, than the absence here of His proper relationship to the children of God. The revelation of grace is precisely what is not found in this book. "Jesus Christ" appears as "the faithful witness." This clearly is what He was on the earth. In a very different form it is the topic of John everywhere: we may trace Him as going up to heaven, where Paul above all contemplated Him glorified; but John's task is ever to point to Christ in connection with what He was here below. If he speaks of Him as the Lamb above, the description is founded on His being the rejected sufferer on earth. "He is the faithful witness, the first^{born} begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth;" - the last displayed when He comes from heaven to earth, as He stands in resurrection the first^{born} begotten of the dead. But what He is in heaven is exactly what is not given here. There is the most careful exclusion of His heavenly position from the relationships of the Lord Jesus that are here brought before us. Even that which connects Him with the Christian, as the One that intercedes for him in the presence of God, is here left out, though I doubt not we may see Him as the angel high priest for others in Rev. 8.

The Lord Jesus, then, is brought before us as man purposely in the last place. God was announced in His own everlasting being; the Holy Ghost in His fulness of governmental power; the Lord Jesus in that which was connected with the earth, even if He were risen from the dead; and this put in the last place, because He is viewed only in an earthly point of view.

But for all that the voice of the Christian is at once heard - and so much the more remarkably, because it is one of the few exceptional ripples which cross the ordinary current of the book at the end as well as at the beginning. Thus it is not without example elsewhere; but it is not what we hear when we have fairly entered on the course of the visions. Before they begin the Christian is heard, as also the bride after they close. Here the name of Jesus is enough to stir the heart in a sweet and suited doxology. He may not be described in His relationships to us, but He who is described is the one that we love. And so "to him that loveth us" (for this is the true rendering, and not merely that loved us) - "To him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages." And as this is the heart's outpouring of its own delight in Jesus, so the next verse gives a warning testimony suitable to the book, lest there should be any weakening of what Jesus will be to those who stand in no such nearness to Him. "Behold he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." This has nothing to do with His presence for us; but after our own delight and thanksgiving have gone forth towards Jesus, the testimony to others most suitably follows the song of praise that had, I may say, involuntarily burst forth at His name. It is Christ coming in judgment. He shall be seen by every soul - if there be any difference - to the sorest anguish above all of those that pierced Him (*i.e.* the Jews). "Even so, Amen."

"I am the Alpha and Omega, saith the Lord God, that is, and that was, and that is to come, the Almighty." He who is the first and the last, comprehending all in communicating His mind, which includes everything that can be given to man - He it is who here speaks - the Lord God, the Eternal. He puts His voucher on the book from the beginning.

Then John describes himself in a manner adapted to the testimony he is called to render. "I John, your brother, and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus, was in the isle

which is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus." It must be evident to a spiritual mind how remarkably suited all here is to what was afterwards about to come out. The whole book supposes saints in suffering, and this too in the form of tribulation, with their spiritual experience formed into the associations of Christ's kingdom rather than those of His body the church, yet surely suffering on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Particular care is taken here to show it to us. Not that the full church or Christian relationship was lacking to John personally; but he stands here a representative man for others as well as ourselves. While, therefore, he had all that is properly Christian, he also had very special communications of another character for saints who will follow us at the end of this age. Thus he introduces himself here, not as a joint partaker of God's promise in Christ by the gospel, but in His kingdom and patience in Christ. It is true for us all; but it is in harmony with the latter day sufferers, not what specially linked him with the Christians and the church. Thus the place taken here is of course that of a Christian; but that is put forward which belonged to others who would not be in the same corporate standing as ourselves. At the same time there is the most careful guard against the supposition that he was not in the full enjoyment of his own place in Christ.

This seems to be one reason why it pleased God to give the visions of this book on the Lord's day. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This is the characteristic day of the Christian; it is the birthday of his distinctive blessing, and it assuredly ought to be the especial joy of his heart, not the less because it is the first day, the resurrection day of grace and new creation, not the seventh day of creation rest and law.

On that day the inspired writer John was in the power of the Holy Ghost with a view to take in and give out the visions he was to see. "And I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet." It was significant, I think, that the voice was *behind* him. The main object of all prophecy tended rather to have thrown him forward. But before the Spirit of God could fitly launch him into the visions of the future, there must be a retrospective glance. In the Spirit he must be, both to shut out every impression from external objects, and to give him an entrance into all that God was about to reveal; but first of all we should recognise the fact that it was on the Lord's day; and next that, before he was shown what was before, he must turn to the voice behind him and learn what the Lord judged of that which bore His name on the earth.

Omit the opening clause and begin, "saying, What thou seest, write in a roll, and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia." The reference of the voice behind is exclusively to the seven churches. When another subject is about to open, the first voice which he heard as of a trumpet talking with him said "Come up hither;" there is no question then of a voice behind. He is forward going to look into the future. But there must first be a retrospective notice, in which the Lord would pronounce His judgment of that which bore the name of Christendom here below. "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice which was speaking with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands." We are told afterwards what those meant.

One like the Son of man is next seen "in the midst of the seven candlesticks," - which, as we are told, were the seven churches, but these viewed according to the Lord's mind about them as a standard of divine righteousness. This is the reason why they were golden. Not only is the same principle general or constant, but it is remarkably characteristic of John's own writings. For instance, the standard for the Christian is not in anywise the law (which was so for the Jew); for us it is Christ Himself, and cannot without loss be anything else. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk" - how? Like an Israelite? Not at all: the Christian ought to remember that he is a heavenly man, not an earthly one. He "ought himself also so to walk even as he (Christ) walked." He is not under law but under grace. The reason is manifest, because the way in which we are called to walk is always according to the place and relations in which we stand. Nothing can be simpler. If I am a servant, I ought to behave like a servant. If I am a master, the conduct that might be proper in a servant would not become me. The

mixture of relations is always wrong; the oversight of them is loss, their denial ruinous. For every position we are set in, no matter where it is or what, there is always the gracious power of God as our resource; but it is to sustain the person walking in consonance with the relationship in which God has been pleased to put him.

We are not now speaking of anything conventional. Life in Christ, where there is spiritual intelligence, takes one out of the vanities of the world in principle. This remark it may be well to add, because a Christian might say "As I am a gentleman, I must walk like one, and still better now that I have Christ." But nay, this will not do for Christ. Did He thus walk? And are you *not* to walk as He? Do you not in this merely sink to the world's level? Are you not just taking advantage of an earthly position to escape part of what Christ calls you to? One knows how readily the heart can thus escape from what is really the blessedness of the witness which the Lord has placed in our hands. Is this Christ? We speak then of what Christ has put us in, not about nature and its wishes and feelings. If you have nothing but nature, it would be intelligible; but if you have seen the Son of God and believed in Him, if by grace you have the same life which was in Him, so that this thing is true of Him and of you, no possible standard can suit for you as a Christian short of Christ Himself.

Thus then it is with the seven golden lampstands. All must be and was measured according to God's own mind, and the place in which He set the assemblies. Consistency with Him as a revealed God in Christ is their rule. Therefore they appear as golden lampstands.

But John saw "in the midst of the [seven] lampstands one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot." There is not now the sign of activity in service - not the robe tucked up, as often remarked. The Son of man is seen clad in the flowing robe reaching to the feet, and He is "girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

Here we have to remark that Christ is seen in a judicial point of view. He is spoken of as Son of man; and, as we know, this is the quality in which it is given Him to execute every kind of judgment. It is expressly so taught in John's own gospel. (John 5) Yet with all this another feature betrays John, and suits him as the writer most strikingly. He that is seen as Son of man is really described with those marks which belong distinctively to the "Ancient of days." Daniel sees the "Ancient of days" in one way, and the Son of man in quite another. John sees the Son of man with the qualities of the Ancient of days. He is man; but the man seen then and thus is a divine person, the eternal God Himself. Now I ask any fair mind, whose style does this identification of nature suit but the writer that we are now reading? No doubt, morally speaking, He must needs execute judgment; but John could not lose sight of His divine glory, even where the subject is judgment, and the kingdom everywhere prominent.

Another thing is observable, when one looks into what is said here. A threefold glory of Christ appears: what is personal; what is relative; and finally, what is official. But there is more also. John says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last." Such terms alone become one who is divine. He who is first is necessarily God; and He who is first, being God, must certainly be last. Jesus declares Himself to be all this; yea, more than this - "the living one, and I became dead." The phrase is the strongest possible way of putting the matter. It is not merely that He died - this is not what He says here, though it is said elsewhere, and very truly. But He says that He *became* dead. This seems to imply His own willingness to die, as indeed He became what did not belong to Him personally, and what in short seemed extraordinarily incongruous with the glorious person that had been already described. This seems conveyed in the peculiarity of the words: so careful is the Holy Ghost to watch over the glory of Christ even in that which told out the depths of His humiliation. "I became dead (records John), and, behold, I am alive unto the ages of the

ages." We must leave out the word "Amen" - it is spurious, and only mars the sense.

Let it suffice once for all to hope you will understand me always to speak of the text on the basis of the ancient and best authorities. There is positive evidence of the most convincing and satisfactory kind for the insertions, omissions, or changes, which may be mentioned from time to time. Do not imagine that there is anything like arbitrary innovation in this. The real innovators were those who departed by slip or by will from the very words of the Spirit; and the arbitrariness now would be in maintaining what has not sufficient authority, against that which is as certain as can be. The error then is not in seeking the best supported text, but in allowing tradition to tie us to comparatively modern and certainly to corrupted readings. We are bound in everything to yield to the best authorities. So in the next words our Lord really says, "And I have the keys of death and of hades." Not the common text, but this is the true order. No one goes to hades before he dies - death being in relation to the body, hades to the separate spirit.

"Write therefore [which is undoubtedly genuine] the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and what shall be hereafter." This gives us, as is obvious and familiar to almost every reader, the threefold division of the book of Revelation. The things that he saw were the glory of Christ in relation to this book, as described in the first chapter, on which we have already touched. "The things which are" present the prolonged condition set forth in the addresses to the seven churches. The expression is very striking, because it not unnaturally implies that the churches were somehow to exist continuously. We can see now why it was. It is very possible, when the epistles were sent out in the days of John, that no particular emphasis would be laid on "the things that are;" but inasmuch as these things have been going on from that day to the present, we can see the immense force such a phrase thereby acquires.

At the same time another way of looking at the book is by taking "the things that are" as already past and gone. I do not doubt that God intended this, and that we are thus given a double aspect of the book. I have no intention to enter at any length on this way of looking at the churches as quite bygone, and the prophecy as at once flowing on; but I mention it because it seems due to truth to name this as well as the other, according to which "what shall be after these" is when the church condition is no longer applicable at all.

"What shall be *after these*" must be owned as the true translation of the words. "*Hereafter*" gives vagueness: "*after these*" makes it precise, and is the plain literal meaning. "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest on my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are angels of the seven churches: and the seven lampstands are seven churches."

In each letter the Lord addresses "the angel." Who and what is he? We never hear of angel as an official title in the ordinary arrangements of the New Testament. But it is not at all wonderful as occurring here, where we do find what is extraordinary. The angel is a term that suits such a prophetic book as the Revelation. Does it mean what we commonly call an angelic being? Not so, I apprehend, where angels of the churches are spoken of. If we hear of the Apocalyptic angel of fire, we readily understand this; and if we hear of the angel of Jesus Christ as of Jehovah elsewhere, we find no insuperable difficulty. But it is another thing when we hear of the angel of this or that assembly. Again, we can understand an angel employed - a real angelic being - as the means of communication between the Lord and His servant John; but it would be harsh to suppose that His servant John writes a letter from Christ to a literal angelic being. This is the difficulty in which those are involved who suppose that angelic beings are here meant. I do not believe it. The meaning appears to be that, as "angel" is used in the sense of representative, whether an angelic being or not, so in reference to the assemblies the Lord here avails Himself of this general truth. An angel setting forth representation (human or not), an ideal representative of each assembly is meant. In certain cases we know that it might be a literal representative; for instance, when John the Baptist sends some of his disciples, there was a representation of his mind by men. The disciples go and give the message of him that they followed. But

it assumes a somewhat different shape when it becomes a question of assemblies which had not been, so far as we know, sending messengers at all.

If therefore we look at the abstract nature of the angel of the church, what is implied by the term? I take it to be this: that the Lord had in view not necessarily an elder, nor a teacher, but one who might be either or both, and before His mind truly represented, and was in a special way bound up with the responsibility of the state of the assembly. Whoever that might be (one, or perhaps more,) was meant by the angel.

Revelation 2

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands."

Here we are evidently on broad ground. The characteristics are general. The first epistle, the message to the angel of the church in Ephesus, looks at the state of the Christian testimony on the earth in its most comprehensive form, and, as I suppose, from the days of the apostle John himself. The Lord accordingly presents Himself with similar latitude. "He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand." It is His position both ministerial and ecclesiastical - His relationship to the angels, or those that morally represented the assemblies to His eye, as well as to the churches themselves. The star is that which acted on the assembly; it professedly was the vessel of light from the Lord for bearing on the condition of the saints of God. If that light was ineffectual, if there was evil mixed with it, the state of the assembly would partake of it. If it was bright, the assembly would be elevated morally thereby. This, I think, is meant. Then, in Him that held them all in His right hand, and walked in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, we have Christ not merely as holding fast those ideal representatives, but as also taking interest in the assemblies themselves. In short, it is Christ in His fullest but most general ministerial and ecclesiastical aspect, viewed, of course, according to the tenor of the book.

The state of the church in Ephesus has the same generality. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil [men]; and thou didst try them which say they are apostles and are not, and didst find them liars." There was faithfulness, and this very particularly in dealing with the wickedness which Satan sought to bring in at that time. The apostles were disappearing, and perhaps had all disappeared save John. I do not of course affirm this; but naturally as the apostles were departing to be with the Lord, Satan would endeavour to furnish instruments nothing loth to claim succession. The church in Ephesus tried these pretended apostles, specially the angel, as one that helped them much by grace from the Lord. The star, as we are told here, so far acted upon the church for good. When thus tried, they tried and found wanting those who set up to be apostles.

But there is much more here. Persistent faithfulness and devotedness still characterised them at Ephesus. "Thou hast patience, and didst bear for my name, and hast not wearied. But I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." This is the Lord's complaint against them. It is plain that it is here as ever the first departure - the most general symptom of declension. What injures, and finally ruins, is invariably from within, not from without. In vain does Satan seek to cast down those who resting on Christ's love have Him as the loved object of their life and soul. Was it not thus when the epistle to the Ephesians was written by Paul? Had they not left their first love? It was not as once. There was failure in this respect. They had here relaxed, but not in their works. These went on diligently, as we learn here. There were works, and labour, and endurance. But where was the work of faith? Where was the labour of love? Where was the endurance of hope? That which had produced the mighty results was no longer active, nor could be. The effect went on; the spring was gone. They had abated in their first love. It was all over with them, unless they judged themselves, and in the power of the Holy Ghost Christ regained His place. "Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I am coming to thee quickly, and will remove thy lampstand out of its place, except thou shalt repent."

Whether it be Christ that is represented or the description of the state of the church, whether it be the fault that is charged home, or the remedy that is proposed, whether it be the judgment that is threatened or the promise that is held out, - all is of the most general description. So thoroughly does the Lord adhere to topics of the largest and most common import in the letter to the angel of the assembly in Ephesus. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of [my] God." Here again it is all comprehensive. What can be wider than to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God?

In the writing to the angel of the church in Smyrna, a totally different state of things meets us. It is essentially a special case instead of the general one we have seen. The Lord was pleased to afflict after the declension from apostolic purity, and above all from first love. He allowed all sorts of trial to befall His people by letting loose the power of Satan, working by Gentile persecutors. And this is seen to be the occasion of the letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. "And these things saith the First and the Last, who became dead and lived; I know [thy works, and] thy tribulation, and thy poverty, (but thou art rich!) and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but a synagogue of Satan." Here observe it is not now a trial by false apostles. A new evil appears. As long as true apostles were on earth, Satan was never able to have Judaism recognized in the church of God. The council in Jerusalem expressly exempted the Gentiles from being put under the yoke of law. And the apostle Paul showed that it was really to annul Christ - to fall from grace - if the law, introduced either for justification or for a rule of life, were imposed on the Christian. For justification this is manifest; for a rule of life it is not so apparent, but it is just as real a denial of the gospel. if Christ be the rule of life for the Christian, and the law be the rule of death for a Jew, it is evident that for a Christian to abandon that for this tends to apostasy. The early fathers thus Judaized; and the leaven has gone on working ever since. To take the position of a Jew thus is to be one of those that say they are such and are not, but are alas! Satan's synagogue.

The Lord here contemplates these evil workers (which is what the criers of works come to) forming a distinct party. It is not merely Satan struggling to get in Judaism, but, as He says here, "the blasphemy" (railing, calumny) "from them which say they are Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan." They have now a compact character, and can be spoken of as a synagogue. It was not merely the tendency of individuals. Individuals there were before, but this is much more. It is a formed and known party of the highest possible pretensions. They set up to be more righteous and holy than the rest, whom they denounced as Antinomian because they stood in the true grace of God. They were themselves corrupters and destroyers of true Christianity without knowing it. Deceived by Satan, they were his zealous instruments, so much the more actively deceiving others, because earnest and honest after the flesh.

The patristic party - those commonly called "the Fathers" - seem to be the leaders of the party here referred to. They have the awful ignominy of Judaizing the church of God. They have exercised this influence in all ages, and this is where, as I judge, their formation as a system is stigmatized by the Lord Jesus Christ. Offensive against Himself, they were wholly opposed in principle to grace. Their character is plain. They dragged down the Christian from his own heavenly associations to that of a spurious Jew. What is still more in John the significant point, they lost all the truth of a real life given to us in Christ. Thus whether it be the depraving of souls or the forming sects after an earthly mould among those who were heavenly according to Paul, or whether it be the taking them away from the life of Christ, and from walking as He walked and simply putting them under Jewish ordinances, the Fathers, I fear, as a class, fully earned the awful distinction here assigned by the Lord.

When man thus regulated after the Jewish pattern, the whole beauty and aim of the church of God was ruined in principle. But the point of interest here is, that succession and ordinances became defined as a system about this very time. It is the great fact, in contrast with the inspired epistle, that you find even

among the ante-Nicene Fathers. Here the Lord seems to me to notice its working at the same time that God was in a measure using for good those that were faithful in the heathen persecutions. Even then Satan was not idle in forming his synagogue "of those that said they were Jews, and are not." On the other hand Christ said in view of the sufferer, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." The trial was not unlimited: the Lord defined the term of their endurance. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." They might be hurt by the first, they would not be by that which follows and is final. It is a question of faith in God. Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom.

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos" comes a very different message. This too is special. "These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest." It is a serious thing where and how we dwell. "Thou dwellest even where Satan's throne is." How came this? One can understand their passing through the scene of his power, but to be dwelling there is significant. Did they like to be near a throne, although it were the throne of Satan - to dwell there? Did they love the shadow or the glitter of human power?

Yet the Lord owns whatever is good. "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." It is remarkable that after the greatest persecutions, when Christendom and even Christians had been seduced into accepting the patronage of the world, up to that point there remained real faithfulness in refusing all efforts to deny the deity of Christ. Under the same Constantine, who was the instrument of thus casting the world's shield over Christianity, was the battle fought and won against the Arian foe. It was under his authority, and indeed by his call, that the famous council sat at Nicea, and the faith of the Trinity was publicly established. I do not mean of course for Christians, who needed no such bulwark as this, but for Christendom. Thus the creed commonly called Nicene, which had for its object the assertion of Christ's consubstantial deity, was published at this same time. I cannot but think that this state of things is referred to here: "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." What a solemn conjunction, that there should be this close proximity between Satan's throne without, but withal the mercy of God still maintaining that fundamental faith of Christ's own personal glory!

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." Clericalism came in rapidly after this. The world's authority brought in worldly objects, and now the ministry became a clergy, a more or less profitable profession. The framers of this were those that held the doctrine of Balaam. Simultaneously with this of course there was the introduction of all kinds of compromise with the world. The clergy encouraged by a misuse of scripture every sort of commerce with the world's evil ways; as it is said here, "who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." I do not doubt that all this is symbolically expressed. But the drift is plain enough where the conscience is not blunted. Where the same evils exist, and all that which would keep the church as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ is gone, no wonder that these warnings are misunderstood. The world had got in, as it still remains, and alas! palliated most by those who owe their professional status to this frightfully corrupt and corrupting influence. And the same spirit of unbelief which let in the mischief keeps it in, decrying the true application of the two-edged sword now as then. The Christians were dazzled by the world's power and glory, which was put forth doubtless in protecting, not themselves only, but the public faith of Christendom in that day. At the same time they fatally compromised Christ by alliance with the world, and there followed the practical return to the world out of which grace had taken the church in order to union with Christ in glory.

"So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." The first of these epistles to the angel of the church in Ephesus denounced "the deeds of the Nicolaitans;" but now the

iniquity in question (Antinomianism it would seem) had become a doctrine. "Repent; or else I am coming to thee quickly, and will war against them with the sword of my mouth." Thus the Lord was no longer fighting in defence of His own people, nor was He employing the enemy's hatred and persecution to nip in the bud or prune evil excrescences. We have seen this just before. A greater trial appears now. Yet, alas! the state of those that bore His own name was such that He was obliged to deal thus sternly with them.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." When the church was seeking the place of public glory, the encouragement to faith was the hidden manna. Let there be at least individual even if unvalued faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. There were, I doubt not, some saints true to His name, though it was not the time when they were led or forced into the position of a remnant. It was not yet a question of coming out from the public body. There might not be energy of faith for this, but at any rate fidelity to Christ was not lacking, and where this was - "To him that overcometh," says the Lord, "I will give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which none knoweth save he that receiveth it." To the true heart His approval is enough, and sweeter than triumph before the universe.

Then follows the last of these four churches. "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write." I cannot doubt that this letter contains an apt adumbration, as far as could be there in present facts, of what was found in mediaeval times. "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass." Christ is revealed now, not only in the all-discerning power of moral judgment, but also judicially prepared to act against evil - "His feet like fine brass." "I know thy works, and thy love, and faith, and service, and patience, and thy last works (to be) more than the first." There was considerable devotedness in the middle ages, spite of the darkness and ignorance that prevailed in point of doctrine. But those who loved the Lord showed their love then not so much by intelligence in His ways, as by unsparing and habitual self-denial. I am not now speaking of what was done out of superstition, either to Mary or the church, when each was made a sort of *bona Dea*, but of the fruit of looking to Christ however simply.

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman (perhaps 'thy wife') Jezebel." This was a new kind of evil altogether. It is not simply clericalism now, nor persons holding the doctrine of Balaam; but a formal state of things, as the symbol of a woman regularly represents. Examine the use of woman symbolically, and you will find, I believe, that this is true. The man is the agent that goes forward; the woman is the state of things that is produced. Jezebel therefore is the appropriate symbol now, as Balaam was just before. The activity was in the clergy, who brought in the basest compromise with the world, and sold the honour of Christ for silver and gold, for ease and dignity. Here we find Jezebel later. This was the public state of things produced in the middle ages, and tolerated where the Lord was named.

As it is said here, "Because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess." It is precisely the claim of the so-called church, - the assumption of permanent infallibility - the setting up to be a sort of inspired authority to enunciate doctrine, and to direct everything in the name of God. Is not this exactly what Romanism does? Does it not then stand in the place of Jezebel? - "Who calleth herself a prophetess, and teachest and seducest my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." All was the fruit, doubtless, of what had been works before, but in far greater maturity now. "And I gave her space that she should repent; and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death." Jezebel was a mother indeed - a holy mother, said the deceivers and deceived. What said the Lord? what said those who preferred "great tribulation," rather than commit adultery with her? This flagrant church-world corruption was now a settled institution. It

is no mere transient cloud of error; it is a body in the highest worldly position - a queen, but also pretending to the highest spiritual power - a prophetess so-called, that was now permanently settled in Christendom, giving birth to a distinct progeny of iniquity - "her children." But says He who has eyes like a flame of fire, "I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give to each according to your works."

"But to you I say, the rest (or remnant) in Thyatira." The remnant is here plain. Thus we must read the text and translate it. We must leave out "and unto." The common text which gives rise to the current versions spoils the sense completely. It is to the rest, or the remnant in Thyatira, "as many as have not this doctrine," that the Lord turns.

Let us weigh a little more these remarkable words. Here we have for the first time the formal recognition of saints not included in the public state of the assembly, yet not so openly separate as was found at a later day. Still they become a witnessing body more or less in spirit, apart from that which set up the highest pretension but in profoundly wicked communion with Jezebel, as the Lord judged and stigmatized what man called "our mother, the holy Catholic, church." "To you I say, the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not known this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." Thus the Lord speaks with exceeding tenderness of those that were true to His name. He did not expect great things from them. I do not the least doubt that those who are commonly called the Waldenses and Albigenses, and others perhaps of similar character, are referred to here. They were true and ardent, but with no considerable light of knowledge if measured by a fuller and richer testimony which the Lord was afterwards to raise up, as foreshown in the next chapter.

The Lord at the close gives a promise suited to the condition. "He that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." This wicked Jezebel not only persecuted the true saints of the Lord, but sought universal supremacy - a world-wide dominion over souls. The Lord bids them in effect to have nothing to do with her, and He will give the true power when He takes it Himself. Let them abide in the place of patience, even though there be tribulation, as there must be if they are content to endure for Christ's sake now. 'But he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as a vessel of the potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.' The faithful will share Christ's power at His coming, and be associated with Himself in His kingdom. But even this is not enough for grace. "And I will give him the morning star." This is not association with Christ in His public reign, but in that which is proper to Him above the world altogether. The heavenly hope of being with Christ is promised as well as part in the kingdom.

And here, it has been well observed, a notable change takes place. The call to hear begins to follow the promise, instead of being before it. The reason is that a remnant is now formed. This does not go along with the public state of the church now. The Lord thenceforth puts the promise first, and this apparently because there is no use longer to expect the church as a whole to receive it. The address is to the overcomer, who is accordingly put before the call to hear. In the three previous churches it may be noticed, the call to hear is first, because the Lord is still dealing with the general conscience of the church. This is given up now. There is a remnant only that overcome, and the promise is for them. The Lord simply takes notice of these in His call. As for others it is all over with them.

Accordingly the division of the next chapter (Rev. 3) seems to be happy at this point. There is an immense change in turning to the last three churches. The ground of such a thought lies in the fact that the introduction to Sardis indicates the Lord beginning again a new state of things. The ancient ecclesiastical or catholic phase of the church terminates with Thyatira: nevertheless Thyatira in this has the peculiar trait that it is the close of the public state of the church, and the beginning of those conditions which go on till the Lord's coming. Thyatira, I have no doubt, contains within it the mystic

representative of Romanism. This can hardly be denied to Jezebel at least; whilst "the remnant" represents those who, without being Protestants, form a witnessing company apart from popery, yet before the rise of Protestantism. The beginning of the third chapter introduces the protestant state of things.

Thus we have had the general condition falling into decline; we have had the early persecution from the heathen; we have had the power of the world patronizing the church; and we have had finally Romanism, which alone (from the allusion to Christ's coming) is supposed to go on to the end.

Revelation 3

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." There is an evident allusion to the manner in which the Lord presented Himself to the church in Ephesus. Ephesus was the first presentation of the general public state. Sardis gives the rise of the new state of things, not strictly ecclesiastical - the Lord acting in the way of testimony, and not so much in ecclesiastical order. Hence it is not said here that He walks in the midst of the seven lampstands: that was ecclesiastical strictly. But here He has the seven Spirits of God. He is God. All power, all governing might, is in His hands, and the seven stars, that is to say, all the instrumental means by which He acts upon the church. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Such is Protestantism.

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain. that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God." Hence what judges Protestantism is this, that they have the testimony of God's word much more fully than those who had sunk into the mere ecclesiastical formalism of the middle ages. There the word of God had been kept away, because the clergy and the word of God can never go together thoroughly. It is, and always must be, the effect of the clerical principle to substitute the authority of man, more or less, for that of the Lord, and to weaken and hinder the immediate action of the Spirit by the word of God on the conscience. I am speaking not of individual clergymen at all, but of clericalism wherever found, Catholic or denominational, nationalist or dissenting.

But the Protestant principle is a very different one. People may not be true to their principles, and often are not. Still, after all, one of the grand points fought for at the Reformation, and gained for Protestantism, whatever might be its defects, was this; - that man was put fairly, freely, and openly in presence of the Bible. God's word was there to deal with human conscience. I do not speak of justification by faith; for even Luther, as I think, never got thoroughly clear as to the truth of it. And though Catholics are miserably deluded, Protestants do not understand justification to this day. They have the truth in a measure, but not so as to clear souls from bondage, or bring them distinctly into liberty, peace, and the power of the Spirit. Even Luther never had peace in his soul, as the settled state in which he walked. We have most of us heard what conflicts he had, and not merely at the beginning of his career but to the end. I do not mean conflicts about the church, but about his soul, It is needless here to cite passages from his extant writings, which prove how sorely he was tried by inward conflicts of unbelief, which amply prove how far he was from the calm enjoyment of the peace of the gospel; but it is an error to impute them in themselves to any other cause than a lack of clear knowledge of grace. In such a state, all sorts of things may trouble the man who cannot rest without a question on the Lord, no matter how able and honoured he may be. I am sure Luther is one from whom we may all learn much; whose courage, faithfulness, self-renunciation, and endurance are edifying and instructive. At the same time it is useless to blink the fact: energetic as he was and used of God largely, he was far behind in the understanding both of the church and of the gospel.

Yet, spite of drawbacks, an open Bible was won for God's children in particular, and for man also. This very thing condemned the state of Protestantism that resulted; because, while it was freely read, there was scarce any thought of forming all upon the Bible, and regulating all by it. Nothing is more common

among Protestants, than to admit a thing to be perfectly true because it is in the word of God, without the smallest intention or thought of acting upon it. Is not this a very serious fact? The Romanists are in general too ignorant to know what is or is not in the Bible. Except the common places of controversy with Protestants, they know little of Scripture. Tell them that this or that is to be found in the Bible, and they look amazed. They may not know it as a whole, having never read it save (?) under the eye of the directing priest, their confessor. The Protestant reads the Bible more at liberty, which is a real good and precious boon; but for this very reason, the Protestant incurs no light responsibility.

"I have not found thy works perfect before my God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." It is a sweeping intimation of the very same way in which the Lord threatens to come on the world. Now if there be in the state of Protestantism one thing more marked than another, it is that they always fall back on the world to deliver themselves from the power of the priest or the church. This has ever been the chief snare, as it is now. If even what belongs to the world be touched, they are in no small agitation about it. I am far from saying this because I do not feel for them much. Nor is it that I have any doubt that it is a great sin to wipe off all public recognition of God in the world. Impossible to believe that *e.g.* the unblushing worldliness one sees in the combination of Dissenters with Papists and infidels springs from just, pure, holy, and unselfish motives. It is rather to be imputed to the encroaching spirit of infidelity, where there is not also a truckling to superstition. Doubtless the infidels hope to gain the day, as the superstitious are very confident on their part; but the truth of it is that the devil will get the upper hand to the destruction of them both, and then find that the Lord will appear in His day for His own judgment of all the adversaries.

The Lord then warns the angel at Sardis, that if he should not watch, He Himself will come on him as a thief, and he shall not know what hour Christ will come on him. This is not at all the way in which His coming is spoken of for His own. They are waiting for Him - expectantly without such an idea as His thief-like surprise. How can it surprise those who are ever awaiting Him? His coming is their joy, and for this they watch more than watchman for the dawn. The figure of the thief can be employed only for the world or the worldly-minded. So solemnly then does this language suppose that the assembly at Sardis have passed out of the practical attitude of waiting for the Lord as a loved object. All intimates that they are in great, and no doubt just, dread of Him as a judge. They have slipped into the world, and share its fears and anxieties. They have lost the sense of Christ's peace left with them. They have not the joy of His coming for them in perfect love, to receive to Himself those whom He loves. The unwelcome visitation of a thief would be utterly incongruous if they were enjoying the sweet hope according to His own word, that He is coming for them quickly.

He that overcomes should be clothed in white, for there were a few in Sardis who had not defiled their garments, and who should thus walk with Him in white; because they are worthy. This has been always the case. Precious souls are there, and our happy service is to help these then, if we can, to a better knowledge of His grace, - not, of course, to make light of their being where they are, or of their doing what they do, yet in the fullest love to feel about them as the Lord does. "He that overcometh, - he shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, and will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

In the next place comes Philadelphia. "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shall shut; and shutteth, and no man shall open." Every word of Christ's presentation of Himself differs from the view of Him given in Rev. 1. This marks particularly the change in the chapter, and especially in the part before us. The address to Sardis also, although allusive to that of Ephesus, is nevertheless no less clearly meant to stand contrasted with it. It is a recommencement, and so far is analogous with that to Ephesus: still, the manner in which the Lord is presented is quite new. His having the seven Spirits of

God was distinct from the Ephesian picture; nor is anything at all similar in the description of the Lord Jesus given before. It is a new state of things; but when we come to Philadelphia there is far more evidence of all things new. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true." When the Lord is seen in the vision of chapter 1, these are not the ways in which He is described at all - "He that hath the key of David."

In the descriptions of the second chapter what was said about the Lord is a repetition of what was found in the vision John had just seen. The only exception is in Thyatira, where He is described as the Son of God; and, as already remarked, Thyatira is exactly transitional. It is the beginning of the changed condition. It is a church state in responsibility though not in real power, being an ecclesiastical body which presents horrors in the Lord's eyes, but not without a remnant dear to Him. This at the same time goes on down to the end, and brings in the Lord's coming; for, it will be observed, the coming of the Lord is not introduced in any of the first three, but from Thyatira it is, because the condition intended goes on to the coming of the Lord. Ephesus does not, nor Smyrna, nor Pergamos: the only semblance of it is in threats of present judgment. Thyatira does, and so Sardis, and also Philadelphia.

But Philadelphia also prominently brings out the Lord in person as also in His moral glory. It is now Christ Himself, and this as One that faith discovers in new beauty, not dependent merely on visions of glory which had been seen before, but Christ as He really is in Himself - "He that is holy, he that is true." But more than this, it is Christ seen according to the largeness of His glory. Faith sees that the blessed One, the holy and the true, is the same that has the key of David. Old Testament prophecy - [dispensational truth](#) - is introduced now. It is "he that openeth, and no man shall shut." There is perfect liberty now - liberty for service, liberty for every one that belongs to the Lord. "I have set before thee an open door, and none can shut it: for thou hast a little strength." They are supposed to be not marked by such mighty doings, as Sardis was, Sardis did great exploits, Philadelphia nothing of the sort. Are we content to be little, my friends? to be of no esteem in the world? never to be marked by anything that men can wonder at or admire? I am supposing now a scale which attracts the world's attention.

This is exactly what is not true of Philadelphia, which is rather formed after a rejected Christ. We all know of what small account He was on earth; and so it is with Philadelphia. Has it no price in His eyes? "Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Just as Jesus was marked by valuing the word of God, and loving it - being the only One that could truly say to Satan as true of Himself, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," so here Philadelphia is distinguished by the same living by faith. To some it might appear a small thing not to deny Christ's name, but nothing is more precious to the Lord. Once it was a question of not denying His faith, as was found in Pergamos; but here it is Himself personally. What He *is* is the main point. Mere orthodoxy does not suffice, but His person, though absent, and the glory due to Him.

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not." Is not this the revival of that dreadful scourge that had afflicted the early church (even Smyrna)? Have we not heard of it? And have we not seen it ourselves? How comes it, that for so many hundreds of years only a part of what the Fathers had laboured at sunk into the minds of men, a certain portion being rejected, as we know, by Protestantism; but now, when God brings out this fresh testimony, there rises a counter-testimony? Satan revives the old Judaizing spirit, at the very time that God re-asserts the true principle of Christian brotherhood, and, above all, makes Christ Himself to be all to His people. And here we have for our instruction the fact, that the synagogue of Satan - of those who say they are Jews, and are not - revives. How stand the facts? How are they even in this country? What is commonly called Puseyism tends to this; and that system is not confined to this country. You must not think it is merely a question of England; it holds equally abroad, as in Germany and elsewhere - in fact, wherever Protestantism is found, and, above all, wherever this is provoked, either by scepticism on the one hand, or on the other by truth that condemns both with the brightness of heavenly light. In order to defend

themselves on a religious footing, men fall back on a system of ordinances and of the law. This is, I think, what is meant by the synagogue of Satan here.

But the Lord will compel the recognition of His own testimony. I do not say when, where, or how; but as surely as He lives, will the Lord vindicate the truth He has given, and the testimony He has raised up for His name. "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

Nor is this all. Not only will the Lord thus vindicate what is of Himself, but, as we know, there is an awful time coming on this world - an hour, as it is said here, not simply of tribulation, but of temptation or trial. I am inclined to think that the hour of trial embraces the whole Apocalyptic period; that is, not merely the awful time when Satan in a rage is expelled from on high, and when the beast, energised by him, rises to his full head of power, but the previous period of trouble, seduction, and judgment. In short, "the hour of temptation" is, I conceive, a larger term altogether than the "great tribulation" of Rev. 7, and still more than the unparalleled tribulation which is to befall the land of Israel. (Dan. 12, Matt, 24, Mark 13) If so, how rich and full is the promise: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." In vain men try to escape! The hour of temptation must come upon all. I dare say that some of us remember when people used to fly to Canada in order to escape "the great tribulation" which they expected to fall on the empire of the beast. Men's scheme was a mistake, their flight foolish. The hour of temptation will catch them, no matter where they may hide. The hour of temptation shall come upon all the habitable world, "to try them that dwell upon the earth," be they where they may.

Who then can escape? Those who at Christ's call are caught up to heaven. They will not be in that hour. It is not only, be it observed, that they will not be in the place, but they will be kept out of the hour, of that coming temptation. What a full exemption! Such is the strength of the promise and the blessedness of it, that the Lord promises His own to be kept from the time. The only possible way I can understand of exempting any from the time is by taking them out of the scene. The Irvingites used to talk about the Lord having a little Zoar. It is not at all however a question of a place of shelter, but of complete removal from the period that is filled by the great trouble or trial that will come upon the habitable world. How can this be secured but by removing them out of the scene before the time arrives? Such I believe the promise here to import. The godly remnant of Jews, having to do with a special and most fierce but circumscribed tribulation, have only to flee to the mountains in order to escape till Jesus appears in glory, to the confusion of their foes. It is quite another thing for Christians.

"Behold, I come quickly!" There is not a word about His coming as a thief now, but with joy. The Lord has revived the true hope of His return; there are those who are thus waiting for Christ, and this epistle seems emphatically to apply to such. "Behold, I come quickly!" In principle it is true of all that are really faithful, but there may be Christians, as we know there are, involved in one or other of the various states which have been described, and which apparently go on to the close. It is in vain therefore to look for a formal obliteration of these co-ordinate conditions, which cannot be till the Lord comes. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." He will be as much marked by power in the day of glory, as by contented weakness in the present scene of grace.

We have yet the last epistle to the angel of the church in Laodicea. But of this I would say but a few words, considering the late hour. The Laodicean picture is, in my judgment, the result of dislike and contempt for the testimony that the Lord had previously raised up. If people despise the truth possessed by those who are waiting for the Lord, they are in danger of falling into the awful condition that is here set forth. Christ is no longer the loved and only object of the heart; nor is there the sense of the blessedness of His coming, which leads into waiting for Him; still less is there a glorying in weakness

that the power of Christ may rest on them. There is the desire to be great, to be esteemed of men, "rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing." You find here a scope, therefore, that leaves ample room for man. Hence it is that the Lord introduces Himself to them as the Amen, - the end of every thing human, - where all the security is in the faithfulness of God. He only is "the faithful and true witness." That is exactly what the church ought to have been and was not; and therefore He has to take that place Himself. It was so before when He was here below in grace, and now He must resume its power and glory and judgment, than which one can hardly conceive a greater and more solemn rebuke on the condition of those who ought to have been His witnesses. Besides He is "the beginning of the creation of God." It is a setting aside of man altogether; and the reason is that Laodicea is the glorification of man and of man's resources in the church. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." They are neutral in principle and practice, being half-hearted about Christ. And I am persuaded there is no place which is more likely to generate neutrality than a sound and true position, if there be not self-judgment maintained and godly sincerity. The more you stand in the forefront of the battle, with the responsible testimony of God, the more you have the grace and truth of God brought out before and by you, if the heart and conscience be not governed and animated by the power of the Spirit of God, through that truth and grace that is in Christ, sooner or later, there will be, beyond a question, a lapse back into a position of neutrality, if not of active enmity. There will be indifference to all that is good; and the only kind of zeal, if there be zeal, will be for what is bad.

This is exactly Laodiceanism. "So then because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." They wanted everything that was precious: - "gold" or divine righteousness in Christ "white raiment," that is to say, the righteousnesses of saints; "that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." They had lost the very perception of what was for God. All was dark as to truth, and uncertain as to moral judgment. Holy separateness and savour were gone. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The Lord presents Himself even there in the most gracious way to meet their need. But the utmost promised in the word that closes the epistle goes not beyond reigning with Him. It is nothing special. For every one that is in the first resurrection is destined to reign with Christ, as even will the Jewish sufferers, earlier or later, under the antichrist. It is all a mistake, therefore, to suppose that this is a singular distinction, It amounts to this - that the Lord will hold, after all, to His own truth, spite of unfaithfulness. There may be individual reality even where the associations are miserably untoward.

Rev. 4 - 11: 18

Revelation 4

We have already seen the bearing of the seven churches to which the Lord was pleased to send the letters contained in the second and third chapters. We have found, I trust, substantial reason and ample evidence in their own contents, as well as in the character of the book itself, to look for a meaning far more comprehensive than a literal historical notice of the condition of the Asiatic churches which were then primarily addressed. It is, of course, ground well known to all that John wrote to seven churches; but that no more was meant than the existing assemblies is more than ought to be assumed. The septenary number is significant, and the division of the seven into two parts. Again, the order of their contents, as well as their nature severally, points to the same conclusion. Further, it is plain that certain phases do not necessarily abide, while at a given point in their course the language implies the state of things meant by them to continue up to Christ's return. That point is Thyatira, and thenceforward the

same feature is in Sardis, Philadelphia, and of course Laodicea. Beginning successively, these go on together. But it is equally remarkable that the first three churches do not. What I gather from it is, that the three earlier churches are severed in character from the rest; for though all are alike typical, only the last four are used as fore-shadows of successive states of things about to ensue, and then be concurrent up to the Second Advent. We can easily understand two things: first, the succession of seven different states represented by those seven churches; and, secondly, that of the seven, three passed away, only retaining a moral bearing; whereas the last four have not this only, but a prophetic and successional bearing, and from the epoch of their appearance, run along-side of each other till the coming of the Lord Jesus.

But the remarkable fact which meets us from chapter 4 and onward is, that we no longer find any church condition on the earth. This confirms the same fact. Had these churches not been meant to have an application beyond the literal one, how could it be accounted for? If, on the other hand, besides that historical application, they were meant to be prophetic, we can easily comprehend that the Lord did address assemblies then existing, but meant by them to give views of successional states that should be found up to the close, when four of these states go on together. Thyatira brings before us the public character of corrupted Christendom - that which is notoriously found in Popery. Then, again, Sardis is that which is well known as Protestantism: there might be orthodoxy, but withal a manifest want of real life and power. This is followed by the revival of the truth of Christian brotherhood, with an open door for the work as well as word of the Lord, and His coming acting powerfully, not merely on the mind as a conviction, but on the affections as attaching to the Lord Jesus. This is found in Philadelphia. Then Laodicea shows us the final state of indifference that would be produced by the rejection of these warnings and encouragements of the Lord.

From the fourth chapter we have the Spirit of God leading the prophet into the understanding of not the church-state, but that which will follow when churches are no longer before the mind of the Lord - when it becomes a question of the world, not without testimonies from God in the midst of gradually swelling troubles; but His witnesses henceforward of Jewish or Gentile character, never more after that of the church on earth. Believers we do see, of course, - some of them of the chosen people, others of the nations; but we hear of no such church condition as was found in the second and third chapters. One of the most striking proofs of the way in which the patent facts of the word of God are habitually passed over is, that this has been so constantly overlooked. There have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of books written on the Revelation, yet it is only of comparatively recent date that so plain, sure, and grave a feature seems to have been seen. I speak now from some acquaintance with that which has been written on the book from the Fathers down to our own days. As far as I remember, there does not occur in hundreds of the ablest books about it which have passed through my hands, the slightest reference even to this undeniable and important fact which lies on the surface of the prophecy.

I draw from this nothing complimentary to man's mind, but the contrary. It loudly confirms those who are convinced of the necessity of the teaching of the Holy Ghost, to profit even by what is plain, certain, and obvious. There is no book so remarkable as the Bible in this respect: no learning nor acquirement, no brightness of mind or imagination, will ever, without His power, enable any soul to seize, enjoy, and use aright its communications. They may, no doubt, perceive one fact here and another there; but how to employ even these for good will never be known unless the Spirit of God give us to look straight to Christ. He that has Christ before him is soon sensible of a difference of relationship and its results. Christ has special ways of dealing with the church that are suitable to none else. This closes with the end of the third chapter.

The inference is obvious. New things come before the Lord, as well as the reader. Now, as notoriously the great mass of persons who bear the name of the Lord have assumed, without the smallest proof from scripture, that the church has always been and always will be while the work of converting souls

proceeds on earth, it is clear that this assumption erects an impassable barrier against the truth. No wonder people fail to understand the Bible when they enter on its study with a principle which opposes at all points the revealed truth of God. There is no such notion in the Bible. It is found in no part either of the Old or of the New Testament; as little as anywhere else is it tolerated by the book now before us. Thus we see churches existing when the book begins; but they are found no more, when the introductory portion closes and the proper prophecy is entered on. A church condition is not, strictly speaking, the subject of prophecy, which deals with the world, and shows us divine judgments coming on its evil, when God is about to make room for good according to His own mind. Such is the great theme of the book of Revelation. But inasmuch as there were Christian assemblies then, the Spirit of God is pleased to preface it with a most remarkable panoramic view of the church condition as long as it should subsist before the Lord on the earth. And we have seen this given with the most striking wisdom, so as to suit at the time of John, yet also as long as the church goes on always to apply, and increasingly, not every part at once, but with sufficient light to give children of God full satisfaction as to the mind of the Lord. In fact, it is the same here as in every other part of scripture: none can really profit by the word, whether in Genesis or in the Revelation, without the Spirit, and this can only be to the glory of Christ.

If this be so, we can understand the vast importance of the change that is here observable. The prophet enters by the door into heaven. Of course this was simply a vision. The power of the Holy Ghost gave him thus to enter and behold; it was not a question of sensible facts. He was immediately in the Spirit, it is said; and in heaven he beholds a throne set, and this, from its effects and surroundings, a judicial throne. It is not at all the same character of the throne of God as we know and approach now. We come boldly to the throne and find grace and mercy to help in time of need. But we find nothing of the sort here, either in the throne or in what issues from it. Even a child might read better the force of the symbols employed for our instruction. What is meant by lightnings and voices and thunderings? Is it too much to say that he who could confound the aspect of the throne in Hebrews 4 with that of Revelation 4 must have a singularly constituted mind? I cannot understand how any attentive reader could fail to see the difference, not to speak of one spiritually taught. Indeed, the amazing thing is, how any person in his sober senses could conclude that the two descriptions characterize the same state of things. They stand really in the strongest possible contrast.

Here we have the throne, not of divine mercy, but invested with what was proper to Sinai: it discerns, denounces, and destroys the evil of the earth. Thus it is the seat and source of judgment on the ungodly. I admit that it is not yet the throne of the Son of man reigning over the world. The time is not come at this point for the church to reign with Christ over the earth. In Rev. 5 the reigning over the earth is spoken of as a future thing ("*shall reign over the earth*"), and not yet a fact. Clearly, therefore, we see here a transitional state of things after the church condition ends, and before the millennial reign begins. Such is the manifest truth necessary to understand the Revelation. As long as you do not admit this, you will never, in my judgment, understand the Apocalypse as a whole

Then we are told that the likeness of Him that sat on the throne is compared to a jasper and a sardine stone. This obviously does not refer to the divine essence, which no creature can approach to or look upon. It is God's glory so far as He was pleased to allow it to be made visible to the creature. Consequently it is compared to those precious stones of which we hear in the city afterwards.

But there are other notable features of the throne. We are told that round about it "there was a rainbow in sight like an emerald." God marks here His remembrance of creation. The rainbow is the familiar sign of the covenant with creation, and it was presented prominently to the prophet's mind. The various points noticed are as in God's mind, not merely as in man's eyes. Thus the rainbow is not seen in a shower of rain upon the earth. It is a question of the simple truth that was set forth by it, and nothing more. So it is with all the other objects seen in this vision.

Next, "round about the throne were four and twenty elders." The allusion is evident to the four and

twenty courses of priesthood. Only it will be observed that it is not the whole number the twenty-four classes of men), but simply the chief priests of these courses. The twenty-four elders, in my opinion, refer to the heads of the priesthood. Therefore this is of some importance to bear in mind, because we find subsequently others that are recognized as priests who were not yet in heaven, who indeed were only called out on the earth after this. Unquestionably these others became priests, but no more elders are recognized. No addition is ever made to the company of elders; they are a fixed number. Priests there are afterwards, but no heads of priesthood save these elders.

These heads of priesthood, I have no doubt then, are the glorified saints above; and in that glorified body, as I apprehend, are the Old Testament saints as well as the New. You will see from this, that I am as far as possible from wishing to undervalue the grace of God to those of old. It seems to me that there are good grounds to infer from the prophecy itself that the twenty-four elders are not merely the church, but all those saints that rise up at the presence of the Lord Jesus (as it is written, they that are Christ's at His coming or His presence). This is unquestionable to my mind. The rising from the dead includes all saints up to that time, and of course, at the same time, the change that is described in the latter part of the same chapter. (1 Cor. 15) All saints deceased or then alive appear to me meant. Thus the Old Testament saints and those of the New are changed; for the "dead in Christ" ought scarcely to be limited merely to the body of Christ. But the phrase "the dead in Christ" means all that have their relationship in Christ, and not merely in Adam; they did not die in the flesh, but died in Christ. It is not a question of Adam the first, but of the Second; but as the one embraces all the Adam family, it seems to me the other should be equally broad. Thus we must leave room in the twenty-four elders for the glorified, whether in the Old Testament times or in the New. This does not in the smallest degree compromise the special character of the church. It will be shown how remarkably this is preserved and manifested in a later point of the visions. At present I merely wish to state briefly what I believe to be the force of the symbol here.

These twenty-four elders, again, are clothed in white raiment, as also they have crowns of gold. They are seated on thrones. It is impossible to apply this to angelic beings. Angels are never so crowned or enthroned. Nowhere do we hear of an angel called to any such dignity. Power no doubt they might wield, but never do they reign; they have the execution of the will of God in outward things, but never do they administer it after this royal pattern. This is destined for the glorified saints - for the redeemed, and not for angels; and this because Christ has given them the title of grace by His blood. As it was said in a previous chapter, He has made us a kingdom, - priests to His God and Father. In chapter 4 we have symbols which answer rather to the kingly title, as in chapter 5 the same persons appear, discharging functions after a priestly type. In Revelation 4 the elders are crowned and enthroned; in Revelation 5 they have golden vials (or bowls) of odours (*i.e.*, incense), which are the prayers of the saints. In the one, therefore, their kingly place is more involved, - in the other their priestly occupation. This is never applied to ordinary angels as such. The only angel ever seen in priestly action is when the Lord Jesus assumes the character of an angel-priest (Rev. 8); not of course that He becomes a literal angel, but God was pleased, for reasons of sufficient weight, thus to represent Him at the altar under the trumpets.

Next we find that attention was directed both to what characterized the throne judicially, and also to the Holy Ghost as having a symbolic description suitable to the scene - seven lamps or torches of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Thus it is not the Holy Ghost in the gracious power which characterizes His relationship to the church, but in governmental judgment, because it is a question of a sinful guilty world - of the creature, and not the new creation.

So too we see that the four living creatures are brought before us. "Before the throne," it is written, "there was a sea of glass like unto crystal." Instead of its being a laver of water to purify the unclean, it is a sea, not liquid, but of glass. It is fixed purity now. Hence it is no question of meeting what was contracted in this defiling world. Those that are here in relation to it have passed out of their failure and need; they are

in heaven and already glorified. And I may just repeat what has been often said before, that all scripture testifies to glorified bodies, without a word about glorified spirits. The twenty-four elders do not mean those members of Christ who have gone by death into His presence. The numerical symbol in fact is inconsistent with such an idea - for this simple reason, that, interpret the twenty-four as you please, it must mean a complete company. Now the saints cannot be said to be complete in any sense whatsoever till Christ have come, who will translate all the Christians alive then on earth, with all the saints who had previously fallen asleep in Him, to be glorified with Himself above.

There is no time that you can look at the departed spirits, but there are some on earth who require to be added in order to exhibit the number complete. In point of fact, so far is scripture from ever representing the separate condition of the spirits as a complete state, that its testimony is distinctly adverse. The church is viewed as in a certain sense complete at any given moment on the earth, not because of the greater importance of those who are on the earth compared with such as are in heaven, but because the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, and is on earth. This is the reason why, (He being the one bond of the church,) where He is, the church must be. Accordingly there never can be any complete state of the church at any given moment in heaven, but on earth rather till Jesus come. But when we speak of absolute completeness, it is clear that this cannot be till the Lord come and has taken all the heavenly saints out of the world, and they go up into His presence above. Then there is completeness; and this is the state that is represented by the twenty-four elders. So that we have here, therefore, still more confirmation of what has been already pressed, - that the entire description presupposes the church condition done with, and a new state entered on. Such is the unforced meaning of this vision of the blessedness and glory of those who had been on earth, but are now glorified in heaven. It is a complete company in the fullest sense; the heads of the heavenly priesthood. They have passed, therefore, out of the need of the washing of water by the word. It is a sea, not of water, but of glass, like crystal. This stamps the fact in a most evident manner.

Further, we have to notice the cherubic symbol. "And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind." Thus there was perfect discernment conferred on them by God. The living creatures I understand to be symbolic of the agency - whatever may be the agents - that God employs in the execution of His judicial power. Consequently the qualities of power are those fitting and necessary for that execution. "The first was like a lion; the second like a calf (a young bull or steer); the third had the face as of a man; and the fourth was like a flying eagle." We have thus majestic power, patient endurance, intelligence, and rapidity, all which enter into the judicial dealings that follow.

The question arises, and a very interesting one it is, not what, but who, are these living creatures? We have seen the qualities in their agency; but who are the agents? This is a delicate point. At the same time I think that scripture gives adequate light, as to those who wait on God, for everything which it is important for us to know.

It will be observed that in Rev. 4 (and it is a remarkable fact) there are no angels mentioned. You have the throne of God; you have the elders, and also the four living creatures, but not a word about angels. The living creatures celebrate God, not yet as the Most High, but as the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." And when they do thus "give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth unto the ages of the ages, the twenty-four elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth unto the ages of the ages, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou createst all things, and because of thy will they were and were created." I give it in its exact form. There is this particular stamped on the elders, that they always speak with understanding. It will be true in its measure even of the Jewish remnant that are to be called after the rapture. They are designated as "the wise that shall understand:" so we know from Daniel and others.

But the elders have a higher character, because they invariably enter into the reason of the thing. This is an exceedingly beautiful feature, which I suppose also to be connected with the fact that they are called elders. They are those who have the mind of Christ. They apprehend the counsels and ways of God.

In Rev. 4 we see that the living creatures and the elders are closely connected, but no more. We shall find in Rev. 5 that they join together. Not merely are they connected there but they positively combine. This is shown us in the case where the Lamb "takes the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sing a new song." The remarkable fact that it is important to heed here is this. Chapter 5 shows us for the first time the Lamb presented distinctly and definitely in the scene. It was not so even in chapter 4 where we have seen the display of the judicial glory of God in His various earthly or dispensational characters, save His millennial one, and of course not His special revelation to us now as Father. In itself we know that Jehovah God embraces equally the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But here the Holy Ghost is distinctively seen as the seven Spirits of God under a symbolic guise; here the Lord Jesus is not yet discriminated. The glorious vision of Him who sits on the throne may include therefore both the Father and the Son; it is rather God as such, than the revelation of personality - the general or generic idea, not personal distinction formally. But in Rev. 5, a challenge is made which at once displays the worth, victory, and peace of the Lamb, that holy earth-rejected Sufferer, whose blood has bought for God those who were under the ruin of sin and misery. There is to be then the full blessing of man and the creature on God's part, yea, man not only delivered, but even before the deliverance is displayed led into the understanding of the mind and will of God. Christ is just as necessarily the wisdom of God as He is the power of God. Without Him no creature can apprehend, any more than a sinner knows salvation without Him. We need, and how blessed that we have, Christ for everything! Thus, whatever the glory of the scene before the prophet in chapter 4 that which follows shows us the wondrous person and way in which man is brought into the consciousness of the blessing, and the appreciation of the divine ways and glory.

Revelation 5

"And I saw on the right hand of him that sat on the throne a roll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals" (Rev. 5: 1). The creature could not open these seals, - none anywhere. But the strong angel proclaims, and the Lord Jesus at length comes forward to answer the proclamation. He takes up the challenge, appearing after a sufficient space had proved the impotence of all others. The comfort assured to John by the elder is thus justified; for the elders always understand. And he sees the Lion of the tribe of Judah to be the Lamb, despised on earth, exalted in heaven, who advances and takes the roll out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. And then they all - living creatures and elders together - fell down before the Lamb with a new song.

It is striking that after this, as we are told, "I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," who said with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power." Here we have the angels, who are now distinctly and prominently brought forward. Why is this? How comes it that no angels appear in chap. 4? And why is it that we have them in chap. 5? There is always the wisest reason in the ways of God of which scripture speaks, and we are encouraged by the Spirit to enquire humbly but trustfully. What is marked by it seems to be this: that the assumption of the book into the hands of the Lamb, and His preparing to open the seals, marks a change of administration. Up to that point of time, angels have held a sort of executory ministry of power from God. Where judgments were in question, or other extraordinary intervention on His part, angels were the instruments; whereas from this point of time, it appears to me that the Spirit of God marks the fact of a vast change, however they may still be employed during the interval of the last of Daniel's seventy weeks. It is providence yet, not manifested glory.

The title of the glorified saints is thus asserted. We know for certain, as a matter of doctrine in Heb. 2, that the world to come is to be put not under angels but the redeemed. Here it appears to me that the seer is admitted to a prophetic glimpse that falls in with the doctrine of St. Paul. In other words, when the Lamb is brought definitely into the scene, then, and not before, we see the elders and the living creatures united in the new song. As one company, they join in praising the Lamb. They sing, "Thou art worthy, for thou hast redeemed," and so on. Thus we have them combined in a new fashion; and, what is more, the angels are now seen and definitely distinguished. Supposing, for instance, that previously, the administration of judgment was in the hand of angels, it is easily understood that they would not be distinguished from the living creatures in chap. 4 because, in point, of fact, the living creatures set forth the agencies of God's executory judgment; whereas in chap. 5, if there be a change in administration, and the angels that used to be the executors are no longer so recognised as such in view of the kingdom, but the power is entrusted to the hands of the glorified saints, it is simple enough that the angels fall back, being eclipsed by the heirs, and no longer in the same position. If previously they might be understood to be included under the living creatures, they are henceforward to take their place simply as angels, and are therefore no longer comprehended under that symbol. This, the suggestion of another, appears to commend itself as a true explanation of the matter.

From this, if correct, as I believe it to be, it follows that the four living creatures might be at one time angels, and at another saints. What the symbol sets forth is not so much the persons that are entrusted with these judgments, as the character of the agencies employed. Scripture, however, affords elements to solve the question, first by the marked absence of angels, who, as we know, are the beings that God employed in His providential dealings with the world, and this both in Old Testament times, and still in the days of the New Testament. The church is only in course of formation; but when it shall be complete, when the glorified saints are caught up, and the First-begotten is owned in His title, they too will be owned in theirs. For as the Lord is coming to take visibly the kingdom, we can readily understand that the change of administration is first made manifest in heaven before it is displayed upon earth. If this be correct, then the change is marked in chapter 5. The general fact is in chapter 4 the approaching change is anticipated in chapter 5. This appears to be the most satisfactory way of accounting for that which is here brought before us.

All the results are celebrated for every creature when once the note is struck (ver. 13).

Revelation 6

Next we come to the opening of the seals. Revelation 6 has a character of completeness about it, with this only exception, - that the seventh seal is the introduction to the trumpets in the beginning of Rev. 8. This does not call for many words on the present occasion.

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come."

Ought we to have here, and after the other three horses, the words "and see"? It appears that they are wanting in the best text* in all these passages. In every one of the cases the sentence ought to be "come." The difference comes to this, that "come and see" would be addressed to John; whereas according to the better MSS. the "come" is addressed by the living creature to the rider on the horse. Clearly this makes a considerable difference. One of the living creatures steps forward when the first seal is opened, and says, Come; and at once comes forth a rider on a white horse.

* Yet in every instance the Sinai MS. supports the inferior copies against the Alexandrian, and the Rescript of Paris with the better cursives, etc.

Let us inquire into, the force of each severally. "I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on it had

a bow; and a crown was given to him: and he went (or came) forth conquering and that he might conquer." It is the answer to the call. The first then comes forth, and the character of his action is prosperity and conquest. Everything shows this. It is the earliest state that the Spirit of God notices as brought about in the world. After the mighty change we have already seen to have taken place in heaven, there is a mighty conqueror that will appear here below. We are all aware that this has been applied to a great variety of things and persons. Sometimes it has been supposed to mean the triumphs of the gospel, sometimes Christ's coming again, and as often antichrist, and I know not what. But what I think we may safely gather from it is this, that God employs a conqueror who will carry everything before him.

It is not necessarily by bloodshed, as in the second seal, which gives us carnage if not civil war. Hence the rider is not on a white horse, the symbol of victory; but remounted on another, a red horse, with a commission to kill, and a great sword. Imperial power which subjugates is meant by the horse in every state; but in the first case imperial power seems to subject men bloodlessly. The measures are so successful - the name itself carries such weight with it - that, in point of fact, it is one onward career of conquest without necessarily involving slaughter. But in the second seal the great point is "that they should slay one another." It was possibly even civil warfare. There the horse was red.

In the third seal it is a black horse, the colour of mourning. Accordingly we read now of a choenix of wheat for a denarius, and three choenixes of barley for a denarius. That is, the price was the rate of scarcity. The ordinary price a little while before we know to have been incomparably less; for notoriously a denarius would have procured as much as fifteen choenixes. Now it is needless to say that fifteen times the ordinary price of wheat would make a serious difference; but however this may have been, certainly the rate current in St. John's day is not a question that is easily settled. Naturally rates differ. The increase of civilization and other causes tend to make it a little uncertain. That there is a difficulty in ascertaining with nicety the prices at this particular epoch is plain from the fact that men of ability and conscience have supported every possible variety of opinion plenty, scarcity, and a fair supply at a just price; but I do not think it is worth while to spend more time on the point. The colour of the horse, to my mind, decisively proves what the nature of the case is. Mourning would be strange if it were either a time of plenty or one governed by a just price; black suits a time of scarcity. Some will be surprised to hear that each of these views has had defenders. There are only three possible ways of taking it; and each one of these has had staunch support. Every one of these different interpretations has been insisted on by learned men, who are as liable as others to waver sometimes to one side, sometimes to another. There is no certainty about them. The word of God makes the matter plain to a simple mind. The unlettered in this country or any other cannot know much details about the price of barley or wheat at the time of St. John, or later; but he does see at once that the black colour is significant, especially as contrasted with white and red, and not at all indicative of joy or justice, but very naturally of distress; and therefore he feels bound to take this in company with the other points of the third horse and its rider.

The fourth seal was a pale or livid horse, the hue of death. Accordingly the name of its rider is Death, and Hades followed with him. To make the force still plainer, it is said that authority was given to him over the fourth of the earth, to slay with the sword, and with hunger, and with death (pestilence perhaps), and by the beasts of the earth.

The fifth seal shows us souls under the altar, who had been slain for the word of God, and for their testimony, who cried aloud for vengeance to the Sovereign Ruler. They are vindicated before God, but must wait: others, both their fellow-servants and their brethren, must be killed as they were ere that day comes.

The sixth seal marks a vast convulsion, a partial answer to the cry as I suppose. Many a person thinks that those in question are Christians. But if we look more clearly into the passage, we may learn that this

again confirms the removal of the church to heaven before this. "How long, O Sovereign, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Is this a prayer, or desire according to the grace of the gospel? Reasoning is hardly needful on a point so manifest. I think that any one who understands the general drift of the New Testament, and the special prayers there recorded by the Holy Ghost for our instruction, would be satisfied but for a false bias otherwise. Take Stephen's prayer, and our blessed Lord, the pattern of all that is perfect. On the other hand we have similar language elsewhere: but where? In the Psalms. Thus we have all the evidence that can be required. The evidence of the New Testament shows that these are not the sanctioned prayers of the Christian; the evidence of the Old Testament, that just such were the prayers of persons whose feelings and experience and desires were founded on Israelitish hopes.

Does not this exactly fall in with what we have already proved - that the heavenly glorified saints will have passed out of the scene, and that God will be at work in the formation of a new testimony, which will of course have its own peculiarities, - not of course obliterating the facts of the New Testament, but at the same time leading the souls of the saints more particularly into what was revealed of old, because God is going to accomplish what was predicted then? The time is approaching for God to take the earth. The great subject of the Old Testament is the earth blessed under the rule of the heavens, and Christ the head of both. The earth, and the earthly people Israel, and the nations, will then enjoy the days of heaven here below. Accordingly these souls show us their condition and hopes. They pray for earthly judgments. They desire not that their enemies should be converted, but that God should avenge their blood on them. Nothing can be simpler, or more sure than the inference. "And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until both their fellow-servants and their brethren, that were to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

This is an important intimation, as we shall see from what follows in the Apocalypse. They are told that they are not the only band of the faithful who are given up to a violent end: others must follow later. Till then, God is not going to appear for the accomplishment of that judgment for which they cried. They must wait therefore for that further, and, as we know, more furious outburst of persecution. After that, God will deal with the earth. Thus we have here the latest persecution, as well as the earlier one, of the Apocalyptic period distinctly given. The apostle Paul had spoken of himself as ready to be offered up: so these were and are seen therefore under the altar in the vision. They were renewed indeed, and understood what Israel ought to do; but they were clearly not on the ground of Christian faith and intelligence as we are. Of course it is a vision, but still a vision with weighty and plain intimations to us. They had the spirit of prophecy to form the testimony of Jesus. Judgment yet lingers till there was the predicted final outpouring of man's apostate rage, and then the Lord will appear and put down all enemies.

At the same time, as we have already seen passingly, the next seal shows that God was not indifferent meanwhile. The sixth seal may be regarded as a kind of immediate consequence of the foregoing cry. When opened, a vast shaking ensues, - a thorough concussion of everything above and below, set forth mystically, as in the previous seals. "The sun became black as sack-cloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell on the earth, even as a fig tree, shaken by a mighty wind, casteth its untimely figs. And the heaven was removed as a scroll rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." This is merely the appearance before the seer in the vision. We are not to suppose that heaven and earth will be physically confounded when the prediction is fulfilled. He saw all this before his eyes as signs, of which we have to consider the meaning. We have to find out by their symbolic use elsewhere what is intended here by the changes that passed over sun, moon, stars, and the earth in the vision. And the result of course depends on our just application of scripture by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Then we are told in plain language, not in figures, that "the kings of the earth, and the great and the rich,

and the chiliarchs, and the mighty, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains." This it is well to heed, because it would be evident that if it meant that the heaven literally was removed as a scroll, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place, there could be no place to hide in. Thus to take it as other than symbolic representation would be to contradict the end by the beginning. This, then, is not the true force. Supposing heaven really to disappear, and the earth to be moved according to the import of these terms in a pseudo-literal way, how could the various classes of terrified men be saying to the mountains, "Fall on us and hide us?" It is plain, therefore, that the vision, like its predecessor, is symbolical; that the prophet indeed beheld these objects heavenly and earthly thus darkened and in confusion; but that the meaning must be sought out on the ordinary principles of interpretation. To my mind, it represents a complete dislocation of all authority, high and low - an unexampled convulsion of all classes of mankind within its own sphere, the effect of which is to overturn all the foundations of power and authority in the world, and to fill men's minds with the apprehension that the day of judgment is come.

It is not the first time indeed that people have so dreaded, but it will be again worse than it has ever been. Such is the effect of the sixth seal when its judgment is accomplished, after the church is taken away to heaven, and indeed subsequent to a murderous persecution of the saints who follow us on earth. The persecuting powers and those subject to them will be visited judicially, and there will ensue a complete disruption of authority on the earth. The rulers will have misused their power, and now a revolution on a vast scale takes place. Such seems to rue the meaning of the vision. The effect on men when they see the total overturning of all that is established in authority here below will be that they will think the day of the Lord is come. They will say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" It is an error to confound their saying so with God's declaration. It is not He but they who cry that the great day of the wrath is come. There is no excuse for so mistaken an interpretation. It is what these frightened multitudes exclaim; but the fact is that the great day does not arrive for a considerable space afterwards, as the Revelation itself clearly proves. The whole matter here is that men are so alarmed by all this visitation, that they think it must be His coming day, and they say so. It is very evident that the great day of His wrath is not yet come, because a considerable time after this epoch our prophecy describes the day of His coming. It is described in Rev. 14, Rev. 17, and especially Rev. 19. When it really arrives, so infatuated are the men of the world that they will fight against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them. Satan will have destroyed their dread when there is most ground for it.

Revelation 7

After this, so far is the great day of His wrath from being come, that we find in the parenthesis of Rev. 7 God accomplishing mighty works of saving mercy. The first is the sealing of 144,000 out of the tribes of Israel by an angel that comes from the sun-rising. Next there is vouchsafed to the prophet the sight of a crowd of Gentiles that none could number, "out of every nation, and tribes, and peoples, and Tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Here it is not simply "salvation," but "salvation to God," in the quality of sitting upon the throne (we have seen in this book, His judicial throne). In other words, the ascription could not have been made before Rev. 4. Its tenor supposes a vast change to have taken place. It is not the fruit of a testimony during all or many ages. All this is merely men's imagination, without the smallest foundation in scripture. So far from its being a picture of the redeemed of all times, it is expressly said to be a countless throng out of Gentiles contrasted with Israel, and this in relation to God governing judicially. It is not universal therefore. These Gentiles stand in manifest contrast with the sealed out of Israel. One of the elders talked about them, and explained to the prophet, who evidently without this would have been at

fault. If the elders mean the glorified saints, these Gentiles are not. Most assuredly they cannot be all saints, because the hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel we have seen expressly distinguished from them. Who are they and what? They are a multitude of Gentiles to be preserved by gracious power in these last days. They are not said to be glorified; nor is there reason to doubt that they are still in their natural bodies. When they are said to be before the throne, it proves nothing inconsistent with this; because the woman, for instance, in Rev. 12, is also described as seen in heaven; but, you must remember, this is only where the prophet saw them in the vision. We are not necessarily to gather that they were to be in heaven; John saw them there, but whether it might mean that they were, or were not to be, in heaven, is another question. This depends on other considerations that have to be taken into account, and it is for want of due waiting on God, and of adequately weighing the surrounding circumstances, that such serious mistakes are made in these matters.

In this case it is perfectly plain to my mind that they are not heavenly as such. There are weighty objections. First of all, we find them definitely contra-distinguished from Israel, who clearly are on earth, and thus naturally this company would be on earth too,-the one Jewish, and the other Gentile. Next they come out of the great tribulation. Far from its being a general body in respect to all time, this proves that it is a very peculiar though countless group, - that it is only persons who can be preserved and blessed of God during the epoch of the great tribulation.

In the millennial time there will be a great ingathering of the Gentiles; but these are not millennial saints. They are saints from among the Gentiles, who will be called to the knowledge of God by the preaching of the "everlasting gospel," or the "gospel of the kingdom," of which we hear both in the gospels and in the Revelation. We all know that the Lord Himself tells the disciples that this "gospel of the kingdom" shall be "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (or all the Gentiles); "and then shall the end come." Now this is just the very time spoken of here. It is clearly not a general summary of what is going on now, but a description of what is yet to be, specially just before the end when the great tribulation bursts out. And there is the fruit of divine grace even then in this vast crowd from the Gentiles, the details of whose description fall in with and confirm what has been remarked already.

I have already drawn attention to the fact that they are distinguished from the elders. If these mean the church, those do not; and as all admit that the elders represent the glorified saints, the inference seems to me quite plain and certain. Undoubtedly we might have the same body represented at different times by a different symbol, but hardly by two symbols at the same time. We may have, for instance, Christians set forth by a train of virgins at one time, and by the bride at another; but in the same parable there is a careful avoidance of confusion; and no such incongruous mixture occurs in scripture. It is not even found amongst sensible men, not to speak of the word of God. So here the prophet tells us that one of the elders answers his own enquiry) "What are these arrayed in white robes? and whence come they?" "These are they who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Clearly therefore they are believers or saints. "Therefore are they before the throne of God," which I take to be not a description of their local place but of their character, - that it is in view of, and in connection with, the throne. This, we have seen, makes it to be limited to the particular time, and not vague or general; because the throne here differs from what it is now, and the millennial throne will be different from both. It is that very aspect of the throne which may be called its Apocalyptic character, to distinguish it from what was before or will be afterwards.

Again, not merely are they there themselves, but it is said, "He that sitteth on the throne shall" - not exactly "dwell among them," but - "tabernacle over them." It is the gracious shelter of the Lord's care and goodness that is set forth by it. This is of importance: because, though God now dwells by the Holy Ghost in the church as His habitation through the Spirit, it will not be so when these Gentiles will be called to the knowledge of Himself. There will be - what is more suited to their character - His protection. Of old God had His pillar of cloud, which was a defence and a canopy over the camp of

Israel (though He also dwelt in their midst); here, too, He graciously shows it is not alone the sealed of Israel that enjoy His care, but these poor Gentiles. It is added that "they shall not hunger any more, neither thirst any more; nor in any wise shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat." I confess to you that I think such a promise is much more exactly adapted to a people about to be on the earth, than to men in a glorified state above. Where would be the propriety of a promise to glorified people not to hunger or thirst any more? If to a people on earth, we can all understand the comfort of its assurance. "For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall tend them, and shall lead them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Then comes at length the seventh seal. This is important, because it guards us effectually against the idea that the sixth seal goes down to the end, as many excellent men have imagined in ancient and modern times. It is clearly incorrect. The seventh seal is necessarily after the sixth. If there is an order in the others, we must allow that the seventh seal introduces seven trumpets which follow each other in succession like the seals. These are described from Rev. 8 and onward.

Revelation 8

"I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and to them were given seven trumpets." Then we see a remarkable fact, already alluded to - an angel of peculiarly august character found before the altar. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given him much incense, that he might give [efficacy] to the prayers of all the saints at the golden altar which was before the throne." Hence it follows that, while there are glorified saints above, saints are not wanting on earth who are sustained by the great High Priest, however little their light, or great their trial. Thus we have here the clear intimation that while the glorified are above, there will be others in their natural bodies yet accredited as saints here below.

But there is another trait which demands our attention. Under the trumpets the Lord Jesus assumes the angelic character. Everything is angelic under the trumpets. We no longer hear of Him as the Lamb. As such He had opened the seals; but here as the trumpets were blown by angels, so the angel of the covenant (who is the second person in the Trinity, as He is commonly called) falls back on that which was so familiar in the Old Testament presentation of Himself. Not of course that He divests Himself of His humanity: this could not be; or if it could be imagined, it would be contrary to all truth. The Son of God since the incarnation always abides the man Christ Jesus. From the time that He took manhood into union with His glorious person, never will He cut it off. But this evidently does not prevent His assuming whatever appearance is suited to the prophetic necessity of the case - and this I conceive is just what we find here under the trumpets. We may observe that an increasingly figurative style of language is employed. All other objects become more distant in this series of visions than before; and even Christ Himself is seen more vaguely, *i.e.*, not in His distinct human reality, but in an angelic appearance.

Here then it is written that "the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it unto the earth." The effect was "voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake." Further, in this new septenary we must prepare ourselves for even greater visitations of God's judgments. There were lightnings and voices and thunders in Rev. 4 but there is more now. We find, besides these, an earthquake added. The effect among men becomes more intense.

"And the first sounded his trumpet, and there was hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth." This I take as a violent down-pouring of displeasure from God. Hail implies this. Fire, we know, is the constant symbol of God's consuming judgment, and it is mingled with blood. It is destruction to life in the point of view that is intended here. We have to consider whether it is simple physical decease or dissolution in some special respect.

It will be noticed in these divine visitations that the third part is particularly introduced. What is the

prophetic meaning of "the third"? It appears to answer to what we have given us in Rev. 12 (*i.e.*, the properly Roman or western empire). I believe that it would thus convey the consumption of the Roman empire in the west. Of course one cannot be expected in a general sketch to enter on a discussion of the grounds for this view. It is enough now to state what one believes to be the fact. If this be so, at least the earlier trumpets (though not these only) are a specific visitation of judgment on the western empire of Rome. Not only was this visited, but "the third of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." This is a contrast. The dignitaries within that sphere were visited, but there was also a universal interference with the prosperity of men here below,

"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third of the sea became blood; and the third of the creatures which were in the sea, which had life, died; and the third of the ships were destroyed." It was in this case a great earthly power, which as a divine judgment dealt with the masses in a revolutionary state to their destruction. Thus not merely the world under stable government, but that which is or when it is in a state of agitation and disorder; and we find the same deadly effects here also, putting an end, it would seem, to their trade and commerce.

"The third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters." Here the fall of a great dignitary or ruler, whose influence was judicially turned to embitter all the springs and channels of popular influence, is before us. The sources and means of intercourse among men are here visited by God's judgment.

The fourth angel sounded, and the third of the sun and moon and stars was smitten; that is to say, the governing powers - supreme, derivative, and subordinate - all come under God's judgment - all within the west.

"And I saw, and I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to those that dwell on the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels that are about to sound." It is a vivid image of rapidly approaching judgments, "angel" being substituted for the better reading "eagle" by scribes who did not appreciate the symbolic style of the prophecy here.

Revelation 9

In Rev. 9 the two next, or fifth and sixth trumpets, are described with minute care, as indeed these are two of the woe trumpets. There remains the third woe trumpet, the last of the seven, which is set forth at the end of Rev. 11, where we close.

The first of the woe trumpets consists of the symbolic locusts. For that they are not to be understood in a merely literal way is clear, if only for this reason, that they are expressly said not to feed on that which is the natural food of locusts. This creature is simply the descriptive sign of these marauders.

To another remark I would call your attention: that the first woe trumpet answers in the way of contrast to the hundred and forty-four thousand that were sealed of Israel; as the second woe trumpet, namely, that of the Euphratean horsemen, answers by a similar contrast to the countless multitude of the Gentiles. As some perhaps may think that this contrast must be vague and indefinite, I shall therefore endeavour to make my meaning plainer. It is expressly said that the locusts of the vision were to carry on their devastations, except on those that were sealed. Here then is an allusion clearly to those whom God set apart from Israel in Rev. 7.

On the other hand, in the Euphratean horsemen we see far more of aggressive power, though there is also torment. But torment is the main characteristic of the locust woe; the horsemen woe is more distinctively the onward progress of imperial power, described in most energetic colours. They fall on

men and destroy them; but here "the third" reappears. According to the force given already, this would imply that the woe falls on the Gentiles indeed, and more particularly on the western Roman empire.

It seems also plain that these two woes represent what will be verified in the early doings of the antichrist in Judea. The first or the locust raid consists of a tormenting infliction. Here accordingly we have Abaddon, the destroyer, who is set forth in a very peculiar fashion as the prince of the bottomless pit, their leader. It is not of course the beast yet fairly formed; but we can quite comprehend that there will be an early manifestation of evil, just as grace will effect the beginning of that which is good in the remnant. Here then we have these initiatory woes. First of all a tormenting woe that falls on the land of Israel, but not upon those that were sealed out of the twelve tribes of Israel. On the other hand, we find the Euphratean horsemen let loose on the Roman empire, overwhelming the Gentiles, and in particular that empire, as the object of the judgment of God.

Such is the general scope of Rev. 9. As to entering into particulars, it would be quite out of the question tonight. Other opportunities do not fail for learning more minute details, and their application.

Revelation 10

Revelation 10, in the trumpets, answers to Revelation 7 in the seals. It forms an important parenthesis, that comes in between the sixth and seventh trumpets, just as the sealing chapter (7) came in between the sixth and seventh seals: so orderly is the Apocalypse. Accordingly we have here again the Lord, as it seems to me, in angelic garb. As before in high priestly function, He is the angel with royal claim here. A mighty angel comes down from heaven, clothed with a cloud - the special sign of Jehovah's majesty: none but He has a title to come thus clothed. And, further, the rainbow is on His head; it is not now a question of round the throne: here there is a step in advance. He is approaching the earth; He is about to lay speedy claim to that which is His right. "The rainbow was on his head, and his face was as the sun" - supreme authority; "and his feet as pillars of fire" - with firmness of divine judgment. "And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot on the sea, and his left on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as a lion roareth."

John was going to write, but is forbidden. The disclosures were to be scaled for the present. "And the angel whom I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for the ages of the ages, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things that are therein, that there should be no longer delay." There was no more to be any lapse of time allowed; but God would terminate the mystery of His present seeming inaction as to government. He is now allowing the world, with slight check, to go on its own way. Men may sin, and, as far as direct intervention is concerned, God appears not, though there may be interferences exceptionally. But the time is coming when God will surely visit sin, and this immediately, when there will be no toleration for a moment of anything which is contrary to Himself. This is the blessed age to which all the prophets look onward; and the angel here swears that the time is approaching. There is going to be no more delay; 'but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God also shall be finished.' The mystery here is, not Christ and the church, but God's allowing evil to go on in its present course with apparent impunity.

And then John is told at the end of the chapter that he must "prophesy again before peoples, and nations, and tongues, and many kings." The meaning of this more clearly appears soon. There is a kind of appendix of prophecy where he renews his course for especial reasons.

Meanwhile, I would just call your attention to the contrast between the little book which the prophet here takes and cats, and the great book we have seen already sealed with seven seals. Why a little book? and why open? A little book, because it treats of a comparatively contracted sphere; and open, because things are no longer to be described in the mysterious guise in which the seals and yet more the

trumpets. set them out. All is going to be made perfectly plain in what falls under it here. This is the case accordingly in Rev. 11.

Revelation 11

The angel proceeds to say, "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given to the Gentiles." Jerusalem appears in the foreground. This is the centre now, though the beast may ravage there. "And I will give* to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." Their task is for a time comparatively short - for three years and a half. "These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth." The witnesses are two, not because in point of fact they are historically to be limited to only two individuals, but as meaning the least adequate testimony according to the law. To make it two literally seems to me a mistaken way of interpreting prophecy, and the Apocalypse in particular, as being eminently symbolical, which Daniel also is in measure. To forget this practically is to involve oneself in clouds of error and inconsistency.

* Probably here, as in Rev. 8: 3, the word implies "efficacy" or "power," as the translators saw in one text if not in the other.

Thus, for instance, one hears occasionally, for the purpose of illustrating the Revelation, a reference to Isaiah, Jeremiah, or the like; but we must remember that these prophecies are not in their structure symbolical, and therefore the reasoning that is founded on the books and style of Jeremiah or Isaiah (Ezekiel being partly symbolical, partly figurative) cannot decide for Daniel or the Apocalypse. Here then are symbols which have a language of their own. Thus the regular meaning of two," symbolically, is competent testimony - enough and not more than enough. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." According to Jewish law a case could not be decided by one witness; there must be at least two for valid proof and judgment.

The Lord shows us that He will raise up an adequate testimony in these days. Of how many the testimony will consist is another matter, on which I have little or nothing to say. One can no more reason on this than on the twenty-four glorified elders. Who would thence infer that there will be only so many glorified ones? and why should one think that there will be only two to testify? However this may be, those who are raised to witness are to prophesy for a limited time. "And if any man desire to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man desire to hurt them, he must in this manner be killed."

Is this then, I ask, the testimony of the gospel? Is it thus the Lord protects those that are the preachers of the gospel of His own grace? Did fire ever proceed out of the mouths of evangelists? Did a teacher ever devour his enemies? Was it on this principle Ananias and Sapphira fell dead? Are these the ways of the gospel? It is evident then that we are here in a new atmosphere - that an altogether different state of things is before us from that which reigned during the church condition, though even then sin might be unto death in peculiar cases. I refer to no more proofs now, thinking that enough has been given.

"These have authority to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy." That is, they are something like Elijah; and they have "authority over the waters to turn them to blood." In this respect they resemble Moses also. This does not mean that they are Moses and Elias personally; but that the character of their testimony is similar, and the sanctions of it are such as God gave in the days of those two honoured servants of old. "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." They are preserved in spite of the beast, till their work is done; but directly their testimony is concluded, the beast is allowed to overcome them. It is just as it was with the Lord. The utmost pressure

was brought against Him in His service. So their hour, we may say, has not yet come, just as He said of Himself before them. There was all possible willingness to destroy them long before, but somehow it could not be done; for the Lord protected them till they had done their mission. We see this in the character of grace which filled the Lord Jesus - which essentially belonged to Him. Here we meet with the earthly retributive dealing of the Old Testament. The Spirit will form them thus; and no wonder, because in fact God is recurring to that which He promised then, but has never yet performed. He is going to perform it now. He does not merely purpose to gather people for heavenly glory; He will govern on earth the Jews and the Gentiles in their Several places - Israel nearest to Himself. He must have an earthly people as well as a family on high. When the heavenly saints are changed, then He begins with the earthly. He will never mix them all up together. This would make nothing but the greatest confusion.

"And their corpse shall lie on the Broadway of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."

It was Jerusalem, but spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, because of the wickedness of the people and their prince. It had no less abominations than Sodom; it had all the darkness and the moral bondage of Egypt, but it was really the place where their Lord had been crucified, *i.e.*, Jerusalem. So the witnesses fell, and men in various measures showed their satisfaction.

"And [some] from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations see their corpse three days and a half, and do not suffer their corpses to be put into a tomb. And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, or make merry, and shall send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those that dwell on the earth."

But after the three days and a half God's power raises up these slain witnesses, and they ascend to heaven in the cloud, and their enemies behold them.

"And in that hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain seven thousand names of men: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; behold, the third woe cometh quickly."

Lastly we have the seventh trumpet. This is important for understanding the structure of the book. The seventh trumpet brings us down to the close in a general way. This is quite plain, though often overlooked. "And the seventh angel, sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world of our Lord and of his Christ is come." You must translate it a little more exactly, and with a better text too. The true meaning is this: "The kingdom of the world" (or the world□kingdom," if our tongue would admit of such a phrase) "of our Lord and of his Christ is come." It is not merely power in general conferred in heaven, but

"the world□kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ is come, and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, that sit before God on their thrones, fell on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God the Almighty, that art, and that wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come."

Here, it will be observed, the end of the age is supposed to be now arrived. It is not merely frightened kings and peoples who say so, but now it is the voice of those who know in heaven. Further, it is "the time of the dead that they should be judged." It is not a question here of the saints caught up to heaven, but a later hour, "that thou shouldest give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to those that fear thy name." Not a word is said here about taking them to heaven, but of recompensing them. There will be no such thing as the conferring of reward till the public manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The taking of those changed out of the scene is another association of truth. The reward will

fail to none that fear the Lord's name, small and great. He will also "destroy those that destroy the earth."

This is the true conclusion of Revelation 11. The next verse (19), beyond a question to my mind, though arranged in our Bibles as the end of this chapter, is properly the beginning of a new series. I shall therefore not treat of it tonight.

Rev. 11: 19□16

Revelation 12

We begin now what may be called the second volume of the Revelation. The prophetic part of the book divides into two portions at this point. This is another landmark that cannot be despised, if we would acquaint ourselves with its structure and the bearing of its contents. And it is absolutely requisite to have, at any rate, a generally correct understanding of its outline; else we are in imminent risk of making confusion, the moment we venture to put the parts together, or to form anything like a connected view of that which it conveys to us. The meaning will be made plainer, if I repeat that the seventh trumpet, which was the closing scene before us, brings us down to the end in a general way.

This is constantly the habit of prophecy: take, for instance, our Lord's prophecy in Matthew 24, where, first of all, we are given the broad outline as far as verse 14 - the "gospel of the kingdom" preached in all the world for a testimony to all nations; and then the end comes. Having thus brought us down to the close in a comprehensive manner, the Lord turns back, and specifies a particular part of that history in a confined sphere, namely, from the time that the abomination of desolation is set up in the holy place. This clearly is some time before the end. It does not indeed go back absolutely to the beginning, but it returns a certain way, in order to set forth a far closer and more precise view of the appalling state of things that will be found in Jerusalem before the end comes.

Just so is it in the Revelation. The seals and the trumpets which follow one another conduct us from the time that the church is seen in heaven glorified till judgment closes, *i.e.* "the time of the dead, even that they should be judged," and the day of wrath upon the earth. Evidently this is the end. Then, in the portion which begins with the last verse of Rev. 11, we return for a special prophecy. The prophet had been told that he must prophesy again before many people and kings; and I suppose that this is the prophesying again.

So the temple of God is now seen to be open. It is not a door opened in heaven to give us the general view of what was to take place on the earth as regarded in the mind of God. This John did see, the general view being now closed; and we enter on a narrower line of things. The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant. It is the resumption therefore of the old links with His ancient people Israel. At the same time it is not yet the day of blessedness for the Jew. Nor is heaven itself opened for Jesus, attended by risen saints, to appear for the judgment of the beast and the false prophet with their train. It is a transition state of things. When God deigns to look upon and gives us to see the ark of His covenant, He is going to assert His fidelity to the people. Of old He gave promises, and will shortly accomplish all which had been assured to their fathers. The ark of His covenant is the sign of the unfailing certainty of that to which He bound Himself.

"And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings," and besides not "an earthquake" only, but "great hail." In the first scene in the fourth chapter, when the door was seen open in heaven, there were "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings," but there was not even an earthquake. In Rev. 8 this addition appears. Now besides there is hail. Clearly, therefore, we are coming to far greater detail in the way of judgments from heaven on the earth.

Then the first sign was beheld above. "There appeared a great sign in heaven." We are not to suppose

that when the prophecy is fulfilled, any woman will be seen either in heaven or elsewhere as its accomplishment. This is a fertile source of mistake in the interpretation of these visions. Her being seen in heaven shows that it is not a mere history of what is taking place on earth, but that it is all viewed in God's mind. Consequently it is seen above. In point of fact, what the woman represents will be Israel on the earth. The woman is a symbol of the chosen people viewed as a whole, for a future state of things that God means to establish here below. She was "clothed with the sun." Supreme authority is to be seen now connected with Israel, instead of her being in a state of desolation, down-trodden by the Gentiles. "And the moon under her feet" is an allusion, I suppose, to her old condition of legal ordinances, which, instead of governing her, are now subject to her - under her feet. How aptly the moon sets forth the reflected light of the Mosaic system is evident to any thoughtful mind. In the millennium this will not be wholly out of sight as now under Christianity, but reappear only it will be in manifest subordination, as we may see in Ezekiel's prophecy. "And upon her head a crown of twelve stars." There is the evidence of human authority in the way of administration here below. In short, whether it be supreme, derivative, or subordinate authority, she is seen with all attached to her. Israel is therefore the manifest vessel of the mighty purposes of God for the earth; and God so looks at her and presents her to us. Thus it is as complete a chance as can be conceived for Israel. But this is not all. "She was with child, and crieth, travailing in birth, in pain to be delivered." It is not yet the day for joyous and triumphant accomplishment of the divine purpose, when before Zion travails she is to bring forth, and before her pain come she is to be delivered of a man-child. There is weakness and suffering yet, but all is secured, and the end is pledged.

Then there is another sign; namely, "a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads." It is Satan, but here invested with the form of the most determined and successful enemy that Israel ever had; for bad as was the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar, it is evident that the Roman power trod down Jerusalem with a far more tremendous and permanent tyranny. This therefore makes the unfolding of this double sign so much the more striking. It is not that she is delivered yet; but she is seen by the prophet according to the mind of God. This is to be her place, - a mighty encouragement, considering what she must pass through before it is all realized. Before this is effected, the enemy is shown in his character of rebellious apostate power. The dragon has seven heads - *i.e.*, the completeness of ruling authority; and ten horns, - not exactly completeness, but at any rate a very large distribution approaching it, in the instruments of the power wielded in the west. Man is never thus complete. What God gave the woman we saw - twelve stars. The dragon has only ten horns. There was a full succession of all the various forms of government, which I suppose to be referred to in the seven heads; but God would not give it that completeness of administrative power even in form which belonged to the woman. All will be in due order when the Lord Jesus takes the government of the earth into His hands in the age to come. "Verily I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The twelve apostles of the Lamb are destined to this special place of honourable trust.

"His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven." Here is what seems to show that the third part has a distinct connection with the Roman empire. We saw the third part for the first time in the trumpets, both in the four earlier trumpets and also in the sixth. I have no doubt the Roman empire is particularly in view; and, by the Roman empire we are to understand what was properly Roman - the western portion, not what the Romans actually possessed, because they conquered a great deal that belonged to Greece for instance, and Babylon, and Medo-Persia. This was far east; but the properly Roman part was western Europe. There the dragon's power was particularly felt. It "drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them unto the earth; and the dragon stands before the woman that was about to bring forth, that he might devour her child as soon as she should bring forth. And she brought forth a male son, who is about to shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne."

There are some things that require explanation here. First of all, a notion prevails that the woman is the church. There may be some Christians now present who have been so taught. A few words, I think, are quite sufficient to dispel the illusion. The church is never represented as a mother in scripture: still less could it be the mother of Christ. Viewed as a woman, the church is the bride of Christ, not His mother; whereas the Jewish body may be truly represented as His mother in symbol. Christ, as man, came of the Jews after the flesh. Accordingly, it is very plain that He is the one here described as the male. The same truth is most evident from the scriptures, whether we take the psalms or the prophets. "Unto us," Isaiah says, "a child is born, a son is given." Again, in the second psalm, we find that the one who is not merely the child of Israel, but acknowledged and honoured by God Himself as the Son, was to rule the nations with a rod of iron. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Lord Jesus is the one here prominent as the male child.

This, then, furnishes an unquestionable and important key to the meaning of the scene we are now entering upon. The woman represents Israel in the mind of God, - Israel in its full corporate character.

Another remark seems to me just. Although Christ, I have no doubt, is referred to as the man-child born of Israel, it may be no small difficulty at first sight to, some minds how to bring in the birth of Christ in this chapter. Indeed, it is a very fair question, and ought to be met. Let it then be observed, that here the Spirit of God is not proceeding with the course of the prophecy. I have already explained that He goes back. Consequently, so far all is perfectly open as to the point of time to which He returns. And another thing should be taken into account - that in this portion there is no date serving to fix the time when the birth of the man-child takes place. But then it may be asked, why should the birth of the man-child be introduced here, seeing that it was a patent fact that the Lord had been born, had lived, and died, and gone to heaven long before? There was nothing new to tell. All this was long and well known through the gospel, as well as in oral teaching to the Christians; why then should it be set forth so strangely in this prophecy? The reason I believe to be, that God desired in this very striking manner to rehearse it mystically, and not at all in full open statement, so as to combine it with His translation to heaven and to His own throne. There was a further link - with the re-opening of God's dealings with the Jews, and the eventual restoration of the nation. All are introduced here together.

Thus it is plain that God is not at all disposing these matters now as a question of time, but of connection with Christ their centre. John is going to enter into the final scenes after this; but before this is done, we have God's counsel shown about Israel. This brings forward the devil in his evil opposition to that counsel; for it was surely what the adversary most of all feared. Satan invariably opposes Christ with greater tenacity of purpose and hatred and pride than any other. Recognizing in Him the bruiser of himself and the deliverer of man and creation, there is a constant antagonism between Satan and the Son of God that is familiar to us all. But there is more than this: Satan sets himself against His connection with the poor and despised people of Israel. Nevertheless, before God openly espouses the part of Israel, there is the remarkable fact that Christ is caught up to Him and to His throne. Not a word is said of His life; not a word even about His death and resurrection. As far as this passage goes, one might suppose the Lord caught up on high as soon as He was born. This shows us how remarkably mystical the statement is. It is history neither anticipated nor in fact. Had it been an historical summary, we must have had His life noticed with those mighty events on which all hopes for the universe depend. All this is entirely passed over. The reason, I think, is just this, that it intimates to us, as in Old Testament prophecy, how the Lord and His people are wrapped up, as it were, in the very same symbol; even as, in a yet more intimate way, what is said about Christ applies to the Christian.

On this principle then I cannot but consider that the rapture of the man-child to God and His throne involves the rapture of the church in itself. The explanation why it is thus introduced here depends on the truth that Christ and the church are one, and have a common destiny. Inasmuch as He went up to heaven, so also the church is to be caught up. "So also is Christ," says the apostle Paul, when speaking of

the church; for we must naturally suppose the allusion is to the body rather than to the head. He does not say, so also is the church, but "so also is Christ." In a similar spirit St. John, in this prophecy, shows us first of all the male child taken to a place in heaven entirely outside the reach of Satan's malice. If this be so, and granted it has a remarkable bearing on what has been already asserted as to the book: we here begin over again, with a particular point of view as the object of the Holy Ghost in this latter portion. Before doing so, John gives us first the general purpose of God about the Jews.

This is strictly in order. We might have thought that the more natural way would be first of all to state the rapture of the man-child; but not so, God always does and describes things in the wisest and best method. The fact is that Christ being born of Israel, there is and ought to be first set forth the tracing of His connection with Israel. The next fact is the devil's opposition to the counsels of God, and hindrance for the time being, which gives occasion to the Lord Himself taking His place in heaven, and eventually to the church following Him into heaven. After this comes back on the scene the Lord's intention to make way for the effectuating of His counsels as to Israel and the earth. In short, therefore, the first portion of the chapter is distinctly a mystical representation of the Lord's relationship with Israel and of His removal out of the scene - the effect of the antagonism of Satan; but it also gives room for God's binding up, as it were, with Christ's disappearance in heaven the church's following Him there in due time. For the church is united to Christ. In this way the rapture of the man-child is not a mere historical fact. Christ's ascension to heaven is brought in here because it contains as a consequence the church's subsequent removal to be with Him where He is, His body forming one and the same mystic man before God, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

If this then be borne in mind, the whole subject is considerably cleared. "She brought forth a male son, to rule all nations with a rod of iron." There is not the slightest difficulty in applying this to the man-child, viewed not personally and alone but mystically; and the less, because this very promise is made to the church in Thyatira, or rather to the faithful there. It will be remembered that at the end of Rev. 2 it was expressly said that the Lord would give to him that overcame power over the nations, and he should rule them with a rod of iron, just as He Himself received of His Father. Does not this most strongly confirm the same view? "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should nourish her there a thousand two hundred [and] threescore days."

In verse 7 we have a new scene; and here we come much more to facts, - not to counsels of God or to principles viewed in His mind, but to positive facts; and first of all from above, as later on we shall find effects and chancres on the earth. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast [down], the ancient serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world, was cast unto the earth, and his angels were cast with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast [down], who accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by reason of the blood of the Lamb, and by reason of the word of their testimony, and loved not their life unto death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." It is evident that at this time persons are spoken of as dwelling in heaven who sympathise deeply with their suffering brethren on earth. Such is the incontestable fact; and soon after Satan will have lost that access to the presence of God in the quality of accuser of the brethren that he had previously possessed; nor will he ever regain the highest seat of his power which is then lost. He is no longer able to fill heaven with his bitter taunts and accusations of the saints of God.

"Woe", however, it is added at this time, "to the earth and to the sea, for the devil has, come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath a short season." This clearly connects the dispossession of Satan from his heavenly seat with the last crisis of Jews and Gentiles at the end of the present age. We find here the hidden reason. Why should there be such an unwonted storm of persecution? why such

tremendous doings of Satan here below for a short time, for three years and a half, before the close? The reason is here explained. Satan cannot longer accuse above; accordingly he does his worst below. He is cast down to earth, and never regains the heavens. Again, he will be banished from the earth, as we shall find, into the bottomless pit by and by; and then, although let loose thence for a short time, it is only for his irremediable ruin; for he is cast then (not merely into the pit or abyss, but) into the lake of fire, whence none ever comes back.

Such is the revealed course of the dealings of God with the great enemy of men from first to last.

From verse 13 the history is pursued not from the heavens, but on the earth. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the male [child]. And to the woman were given two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished there a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." Thus power is given to escape, rapid means of flight from Satan's persecution. It is not power to withstand Satan, and fight the battle out with him, but the facility given to flee from his violence. This seems to be what is meant by the two wings of the great eagle - a figure of vigorous means of escape. That which is in nature the most energetic image of flight is vividly applied to the case before us.

Then we find the enemy, baffled by God's provision, using other efforts. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood." That is, he here endeavours to stir up the nations (such as are, I suppose, in a state of disorganisation) to overwhelm the Jews. In vain; for "the earth" - what was under settled government at this time - "helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus." By these are meant such of the Jews as will be remarkable for their power of testimony. The woman represents the more general idea of that people. The remnant of her seed are the witnessing portion. You must bear in mind that all the Jews of that day will by no means have the same spiritual power. There will be differences. Some will be much more energetic and intelligent than others. Satan hastens therefore, and endeavours to put down those that seem most useful as the vessels of the testimony of Jesus.

This accordingly leads to the plans that Satan sets up for the purpose of accomplishing his long-cherished design of supplanting not only gospel and law, but the testimony to the kingdom of God in the world. And there are two especial methods which Satan will adopt, suited to catch a twofold class of men who are never wanting in this world - natural men, some of Whom like power, as others like religion. I am not now speaking of any who are born of God; but it is clear that man's heart runs either after intellect and power, or into religious formality. The devil will therefore put forward two main instruments as leaders of systems that express human nature on either side, exactly suiting what the heart of man seeks and will have. Thus Satan has designed from the beginning to set up himself in man as God. For he too will work by man, as God Himself is pleased to develop all His wondrous ways and counsels in man. As the Lord Jesus is not only a divine person but the expression of the divine glory no less than of His grace; and as the church is the object of His love in heavenly blessedness, and Israel for the earth; so the enemy (who cannot originate but only corrupt the truth, and lie by a sort of profane imitation of the counsels of God) will have his beasts no less certainly than God has His Lamb.

In Rev. 13 this is made plain. There are these two beasts; the first civil power, the second religion, and both apostate.

Revelation 13

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns."

The beast that emerges from the revolutionary Roman world is just adapted for the dragon to fill with opposition to the purposes of God. In Rev. 12 the dragon was seen similarly characterized as the beast. Both have the forms of power peculiar to the Roman empire. But there is a difference also: "And upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his beads names of blasphemy." The dragon has the diadems on his heads; the beast shows us more the actual facts - the horns crowned. The dragon represents the enemy of Christ in his political employment of the Roman empire, and this from first to last; so that the heads or successive forms of power are said to be crowned, not the horns, which were only as a fact to be developed before the close of its history - at the earliest not before the Gothic barbarians broke up the empire of the west. On the other hand, in the beast of Rev. 13 we see, not merely the hidden spirit of evil making use of the power of Rome in its various changes, but the empire in its final state when the deadly wound done to the imperial head was healed, and Satan shall have given to it thus revived his power, his throne, and great authority. Now this is the very time when the ten horns receive authority as kings; it is simultaneously and continuously with the beast, as Rev. 17 informs us; and hence the horns of the beast are seen crowned (not merely the heads, as in the dragon's case previously).

Further, the beast is described afterwards in remarkable terms, which allude to the beasts so well known in Daniel 7. "And the beast which I saw was like a leopardess, and its feet were as of a bear, and its mouth as a lion's." Here we have certain qualities that resemble the three first-named beasts of the prophet Daniel. Though Satan does not originate, he adopts whatever will suit of that which has been, and endeavours by this most singular combination to bring out the beast or fourth empire (for there is none to succeed) so as to surpass for the last days everything known of old.

What is meant by a beast? An imperial system or empire, but withal refusing to recognize God above. Man was made to own Him, and alone does, as taught of God. Man alone of all beings in the earth was made to look up to One above, and is responsible to do the will of God. The beast does not look up but down; it has no sense of an unseen superior. "The fool hath said in his heart that there is no God." In principle this is true of every unrenowned man; but here it is the more tremendous, because an empire ought to be the reflection of the authority that God in His providence has conferred on it. No empire has avoided the moral sentence implied in the symbols, but this beast will go beyond all that have ever arisen. At the time that the prophecy was given the fourth beast was in existence; but the prophet was given to see that out of a state of political convulsion, just before the last three years and a half, and connected with Satan's expulsion from heaven by the power of God, this beast rises up out of the sea. That is, there will be a state of total confusion in the west, and an imperial power will rise up. This is the one here described: "And I saw one of its heads as it were wounded to death; and its deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." It is not hard to see sufficient grounds for gathering that the wounded head was the imperial form of power. The empire of the west will have been long extinct, when, strange to say, it reappears in the latter day. But there is a great deal more than simply the revival of imperialism, which draws out the astonishment of the world. They had thought it all over with the Roman empire. They could easily understand a new empire; they could readily conceive a Teutonic kingdom, or a Muscovite dominion, or any other of large space and population; but the revival of the Roman empire will take the world by surprise. This is a part of what is here referred to. The grounds of this assertion, however, depend on Rev. 17, so that I cannot now enter into minute evidence, nor do I wish to anticipate what will come before us in the next lecture. Let it suffice to give what I believe to be the truth revealed about it as we pass onward.

But then it is not simply that this empire had qualities of power that belonged to more than one of the previous empires, and that it had its own peculiarity in that it was marked by the revival of imperialism at the close. We are told that "they worshipped the dragon, because he gave authority to the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast? and who is able to make war with him?" It is evident, therefore, that we have here an apostate and idolatrous state of the world. The dragon is worshipped, as is the beast; and 2 Thess. 2 is plain that worship is paid to another personage connected

with, but distinct from, these both, called "the man of sin," which is much more a religious power. The first beast is a political body; the religious chief will not be in the west at all, but in Jerusalem, and a very special object of worship in the temple of God there at the close.

This is a difficulty to some, because it is distinctly said that this man of sin will not tolerate any other object of worship. But then you must remember that they are all the same firm. Therefore to worship the one is pretty much to worship the other; just as in regard to the true God, there is no worship of one person in the Godhead without the same homage to the others. It is in vain for any to pretend to worship the Father without worshipping the Son, and he that worships the Father and the Son can only worship in the power of the Holy Ghost. When we worship God as such, - when we say "God," we do not mean Father only, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So precisely in this awful counterpart, the fruit of the energy of satanic craft and power at the close. The worshipping of the dragon and of the beast seems therefore quite consistent with divine worship paid to the man of sin. The fact is, they are, as often remarked with justice, the great counter-trinity - the trinity of evil as opposed to the Trinity of the Godhead. The devil is clearly the source of it all; but then the public leader of his power politically is the beast; and the grand religious agent, who works out all plans and even miracles in its support, is the second beast or man of sin.

This appears to be the true and mutual bearing of all, if we bow to all these scriptures. I am aware that differences of thought exist here as in almost everything else. But this objection has no force at all. The only question is, what best satisfies the word of God, - what most faithfully answers not merely to the letter of it, but to its grand principles? I am persuaded, therefore, that far from any real obstacle in the fact of these three different objects being combined in worship, on the contrary the force and nature of the case cannot well be understood unless this is seen.

Let us pursue the other points which the scriptures set before us. "And there was given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given him to continue [or act] forty-two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that tabernacle in heaven." Here again it seems evident that there is a people in heaven removed from exposure to the power either of Satan or of the public instruments of his malice in the world. There are also saints here below. The tabernacle above may be blasphemed, and those that dwell there Satan may revile, but he cannot touch - cannot even accuse longer before God. He turns therefore all his power to deal with man on the earth.

"And it was given him to make war with the saints" (clearly those that are not in heaven), "and to overcome them: and authority was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." It will be seen that there is an invariable distinction between the crowd of the Gentiles scattered over the world, and "those that dwell on the earth." The difference is that the former class is a larger term, embracing the world at large; whereas by the latter is meant a considerably narrower sphere, whose character of earthliness is the more decided, because it had known the heavenly testimony of Christ and the church. The name might be still held; but apostate hearts deliberately preferred earth to heaven, and would surely have their portion in neither, but in the lake of fire.

It is solemn to see that this is what Christendom hastens to become: infidelity and superstition are rapidly forming it now. All that is at work is bringing about this earthly and godless state of things. Never since the gospel was preached were men more thoroughly settling down in the endeavour to improve the earth, and consequently to forget heaven day by day, only thinking of it as a dismal necessity when they die, and cannot avoid leaving the world. But as to turning to heaven, both as a hope full of joy and as a home for the affections, whenever was it more thoroughly kept out of the minds of men? All this then prepares us for the designation given to the people that did hear of heaven but deliberately gave up all the hopes connected with it to settle down on the earth. They were dwellers on

the earth. The others are "every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation," that have heard comparatively little about the gospel. But he will endeavour to deal with both; and more particularly "all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose name is not written in the book of life of the slain Lamb from the foundation of the world."

Carefully bear in mind that "from the foundation of the world" belongs not to "slain," but to the writing of the name. John does not mean that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, but that the name was not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. Compare Rev. 17: 8.

"If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity." The importance of this statement was to guard the saints themselves from taking power peremptorily into their own hands. They might cry to God, they might ask Him to arise and judge the earth, but they were not to fight themselves. As the beast would take power, so should he suffer the consequence. He might lead into captivity, but into captivity he must go. He might kill with the sword, but he must be killed himself: indeed, his would be a still more awful doom. At the same time patience, with this retributive sanction annexed, is put in as a general principle, and stated in such a form as to apply to any one. It was surely and particularly meant to guard the saints from mistake and wrong. I do not think the direct application is to the beast, but rather warning to the saints of God. "Here is the patience and faith of the saints." This gives the application.

In the latter part of the chapter we have a second beast. This calls for more attention, because there has been and there is a danger of some confusion and difficulty on this subject. Let it be observed that the second beast it is which more particularly resembles in wickedness what the Lord Jesus was in goodness. It is indeed a "beast;" that is, it has a kind of imperial power, though very likely on a far smaller scale than the first beast. Still it has the character of empire attached to it. It is a beast, and not merely a horn. Then the horns that it has have a peculiar character. "He had two horns like a lamb." There was the pretence of resembling the Messiah. But "he spake as a dragon." It was really the expression of Satan. "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence." It is, therefore, plain that the second beast is really the more energetic of the two, and the active instrument of evil.

And this is always the case in every form of wickedness that has ever been forged for this world. The promoters of it - the persons that exercise the influence, sometimes unseen, sometimes publicly - are as a rule those that put religion forward. The religion of the earth is the prolific source of all the worst evil that is done under the sun. The devil could not accomplish his plans if there was not such a thing as earthly religion. Is not this an awful thing to think of, and a solemn thing, too, for those that have the smallest connection with it?

Accordingly in this case, observe, the second beast which resembles Christ, and takes that place, does not come out of the sea, or the turbulent state of the nations, but out of the earth. It is a more settled state of things when this beast appears, who exercises all the authority of the first beast before him (that is, in his presence, with his full sanction: it is not usurpation; it is not in any sense something done without him; but it is done in his presence, as is here said); "and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast" (there is an understanding between them), "whose deadly wound was healed." It is remarkable that in 2 Thess. 2 we do not hear of his causing the world to worship the first beast; but that he compels or at any rate claims worship, and is himself worshipped as God. For he arrogates divine worship to himself.

It makes the whole matter plain, if we remember that the first beast means the Roman empire, and, consequently, its seat is the west. The second beast, on the contrary, is in the land of Palestine, and has a Jewish form. Any one who looks at 2 Thess. 2 can see that we are in view of what will be in the land of Judea, and not in Rome. It is the temple of God that is particularly seen, where the man of sin sets

himself up as an object of worship. Only we must remember that we must read scripture with scripture. Supposing I treat the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians as giving me all that the Bible tells about the man of sin, I foreclose scripture, and must have an imperfect account. On the other hand, if we take only what we have in Revelation 13, we shall want certain elements necessary for completing the sketch. I believe that all this is arranged with consummate wisdom by God, because He does not want us to read only one part of His word; He wishes us thoroughly to search into all His word. He will not give a proper understanding of holy writ, unless there be a real confidence in and value for all that He has given us. Consequently it is only by putting together these scriptures, as to which there is ample light to show what is referred to, that we can really understand the subject.

Now it is quite plain in the first part of the chapter that we have before us a mighty political power. It is equally certain that 2 Thessalonians 2 describes not a vast imperial system so much as a religious power. An utterly lawless personage is the man of sin, but still essentially a religious power. It claims to itself what belongs to God; and this is precisely what we find connected with the second beast.

We may remark another feature in the symbol here. It had two horns. The reason, as I suppose, is connected with the whole testimony of John. Any one who has looked into it will see that even as to our blessed Lord Himself, the general bent is to show what He was on earth - not what He is in heaven. I admit there are exceptional passages in John; but while Paul's object is to direct us to Christ in heaven, as the characteristic point of his witness, John on the contrary draws particular attention to what He was on earth.

This seems to me of importance for the meaning of these two horns. The Lord Jesus, as all are aware, was a prophet on earth; and assuredly, as we know, He will reign as king over the earth. But what lies between? He is priest; but He is priest in heaven. Accordingly it is not the place of John but of Paul to bring out the heavenly priesthood of Christ. John never, as far as I know, develops the offices of Christ above. Not but that he points out what connects itself with them, as for instance, in John 13, and again in John 14, as well as in John 17 and John 20. But these are quite exceptions. The general strain of John is to dwell on Christ manifesting God here below. Paul's doctrine is man glorified in heaven.

Accordingly this I believe to be the key to the two horns of the beast. When the Antichrist appears, he will not take the place of being a priest; far higher will be his assumption. He will set up to be a prophet, and a king, yea, a king imitating what Christ will be to Israel. We have two horns, not seven; - it is an imitation, but not of the full power of Christ. In the Lord we see perfection of power, just as could be said of the Holy Ghost in His fulness of power for government. In the Antichrist there is the pretension to what belonged to Christ connected with the earth, and with the most marked absence of what pertains to Him in heaven.

This is no mean evidence by the way, that the idea of applying all this to the papacy as its full meaning is a mistake; for the essential feature of the papacy lies in its assumption to be a living earthly representative of Christ's priesthood. It is precisely the corruption of what is heavenly and not Messianic. Popery is much more *antichurch* than antichrist. Such is the difference.

But when Rev. 13 is fulfilled, there is no question of the church any longer. The Christian body will be no more seen on earth. the saints of the high places are on high. Accordingly it is not a mere sham clothing with the priestly power of Christ which the antichrist makes, but a false assumption of His prophetic place which was on the earth, and of His kingly sphere which will be on the earth. This personage claims both powers. He has two horns like a lamb, and is active in the performance of great signs and wonders. He has a double activity. First of all, he borrows the controlling influence of the Roman empire, - he exercises all the authority of the first beast. Besides this, he does a vast deal on his own account which the Roman emperor could not do. "And he worketh great signs, that he should even make fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." That is, he imitates the power not only of Christ but

of God. He claims to be the Jehovah God of Israel. Just as Jesus is Jehovah as well as Messiah, so this vessel of Satan's power in Jerusalem will emulate what God did by Elijah to disprove the claims of Baal. Fire, we know, came down and consumed the sacrifice of old, and God demonstrated as clearly that Baal was not God, as that Jehovah was. So the second beast will do wonders, not really, but in appearance. "He worketh great signs that he should even make fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of those signs which it was given him to work in the sight of the beast."

All shows that this is the antichrist. The first beast does not work any miracles whatever. He astonishes the world by reviving imperialism; but this is a very different thing and cannot properly be called a sign. It may and will amaze men, but is not a miracle. But the beast out of the earth or land, which is incomparably more active and energetic than the first, does work great signs (no doubt by Satan's energy, but still he works them); and the consequence is that he "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth," saying to them especially "to make an image to the beast, which had the stroke of the sword, and lived." I am not prepared to say whether this is or is not the abomination of desolation set up in the holy place. It seems to resemble that idol, and may probably be the same thing.

"And it was given him to give life to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast. for it is a man's number; and his number [is] six hundred threescore [and] six."

The various guesses that have been made respecting this number are most inadequate. It may be that it is one of those secrets that cannot be unravelled until the person appears, when we may be sure that at least the wise will understand it. That we are to understand it now is, I think, more than we ought to assume. To what moral profit could it possibly serve? Assuredly everything that can edify and refresh the soul, and that can be used by the Holy Ghost for real blessing in separating us from the world and attaching us to heaven, and, above all, to Christ, we may gather from the Revelation rightly understood now. Indeed, I believe we can gather a great deal more than those who are to be in the circumstances will be able to reap in their day. But there may be points of minute application kept back by the wise reserve of God, who does not indulge mere curiosity, as this would be. Such knowledge will be of practical importance only when the time comes; and therefore I do not doubt that this is just one of those points in which the Lord does not gratify men's minds now. I have heard no explanation that carries any force along with it. Many of those which have been offered entirely and obviously fail - for instance, "apostacy" and such like explanations. "Apostacy" is not the number of a man; nor for similar reasons can "apostate" stand, nor, perhaps, "the Latin man" or kingdom, though certainly entitled to attention. Further, it does not seem, as generally thought, to be the number of antichrist, the second beast, but of the Roman empire, or rather Emperor, in final antagonism to Jehovah and His anointed.

Revelation 14

Next we come to Revelation 14, where we have neither the counsels of God as opposed by Satan, first in heaven and then in earth; nor the plan and instruments by which Satan gives battle to those counsels. All this we have had in chapters 12 and 13. But now we enter on another line of things. What is God doing with His own? Nothing? Impossible! All must be active and good. God, therefore, is pleased to reveal to us a variety of ways in which He will put forth His power, and send both testimony and warning suited to the crisis; and this is given with remarkable completeness throughout the seven divisions into which this chapter naturally divides itself.

The first is a certain numbered multitude separated to the Lamb on mount Zion. The Lord Jesus is about

to insist on His rights in the midst of Israel; and Zion is the known centre of royal grace. Royal, I say, because it is Christ asserting His title as Son of David; but it is also royal grace., because it supposes the total ruin of Israel, and that the Lord in pure favour begins there to gather round Himself once more. This accordingly is the first form in which God displays His action for the last days. The devil may have his beasts and horns; God has His Lamb; and the Lamb now is not seen on the throne in heaven, or taking a book. He stands on mount Zion. It is a notable point of progress toward the kingdom that is clearly brought before us before the close.

"And I looked, and, lo, the Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." They are not spoken of as conscious of any such relationship, as it is not a question of their Father, not of His Father and their Father. Nothing of the kind is ever found in the Apocalypse but "his Father's name on their foreheads." "And I heard a voice from heaven, as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sing [as it were] a new song in presence of the throne, and in presence of the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand, which were bought from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins."

These saints had not corrupted themselves; and the name of the Lamb is coupled with them. With Babylonish wickedness here below they had nothing to do; they were pure, and are associated with the holy Sufferer. "These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were bought from among men, first-fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault" ["before the throne of God" is spurious]. Such is the first action of God. It is a complete remnant, not said to be from the twelve tribes of Israel, such as we saw in Rev. 7; but this is particularly of the Jews. They were gathered out from those guilty of rejecting the Lamb. And now. God answers all that and other wickedness by this merciful and honourable separation to the Lamb, who is now about to be installed in His royal seat on mount Zion.

The next scene gives us an angel flying. "And I saw," it is said, "another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having [the] everlasting gospel to preach unto those that sit on the earth, and unto every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people." Why is it called "everlasting"? We must remember that the gospel which is being preached now is a very special gospel, and in no way an everlasting gospel. Nobody ever heard the gospel that is preached now till Jesus died and rose and even went to heaven. That is to say, the gospel as it should be preached in and out of Christendom depends on the most stupendous facts ever accomplished here below, for which God waited more than four thousand years even of man's dwelling on the earth before He would or could righteously send it forth. Consequently the gospel of the grace of God, as we know, is not properly (never in scripture) called the "everlasting gospel." I suspect that most use these terms without thinking what is really meant. When they call the gospel now the "everlasting gospel," they have probably some vague notion that it connects us with eternity. They think it a fine-sounding epithet, conveying I really do not know what; but at any rate it is to be supposed that there is some idea in the mind of those that so characterize "the gospel of God." It is certainly a mistake, if scripture is to decide.

"Everlasting gospel" means what it says. It means those glad tidings that always have been and always will be true: whatever else God has made known to man, this has always abode unchanging. What is it then? The glad tidings of God always were that He purposes to bless man by the promised seed Christ Jesus, to set him up over the rest of creation, to have dominion as His image and glory. At the very beginning the first chapter of Genesis proves that this is God's mind for man here below. The end of all things will proclaim the selfsame thing. The millennium will be a grand demonstrative testimony to it. In the new heavens and the new earth man will be thoroughly and for ever blest.

The declaration of this I believe to be the everlasting gospel. In the latter day it will act as the setting

aside of the lie of Satan, who puts and would fain keep man in a position of estrangement from God, who is morally forced to be the judge of man instead of being the blesser of all upon the earth, and consequently to cast him into hell. All this, it is plain, is the fruit of Satan's wiles; but the everlasting gospel presents God as the blesser of man and creation, as it always was in His mind, and as He will certainly bring it to pass; not, of course, for every individual man, because those who despise His mercy in Christ, and those especially who having heard despise the gospel of His grace, must be lost for ever. I am speaking now of what always was before Him, and always kept before man in His word.

The way in which the subject is spoken of here confirms this. "Fear God," is the message, "and give glory to him" (there is thus the evident contradiction of idolatry); "for the hour of his judgment is come." Then will be the downfall of all those that oppose God, not only of all the vanities of the nations, but of all those that heed or sustain them against God. "Worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Clearly therefore it is the universal message of God to man, and connected with His creation glory. The solemn threat of His speedy judgments is a ground of pressing on the blinded consciences of man the claim of the honour solely due to Him.

There are no doubt many who think it an extraordinary circumstance that God should send out such a message as this in days rapidly approaching. Let me say why such a difficulty is felt. It is because men conjecture and judge out of their own position and their own relationships. But never earl we understand anything aright as long as we reason and conclude thus. It is not the way to understand any part of the Bible, least of all perhaps prophecy. If it be a question of our conduct or duty, it is indispensable to stand on our proper relationship; we must abide carefully in the place that God has given us, while bowing to the word of God that applies to us there. How can we act intelligently or rightly as Christians unless we, knowing what it means, believe we are Christians? We only glorify our God and Father just so far as we look up as children to Him as our Father, and as saints own Him as our God. This is surely true. But here no Christians are said to be on earth: we have elect Jews; we have nations, along with "those that sit upon the earth." That is, there are men, apparently apostates, under the latter designation, as well as the general mass of mere nations, tribes, tongues, and peoples. It seems then that God comes down, as it were, to meet them on the lowest possible ground of His own truth. And what is that? They are called to fear God and give glory to Him; and this is on the ground that He is Judge, just about to deal with His own world. He calls upon them to abandon all that idolatry into which they will have fallen, particularly in those days.

And I have not the slightest question myself that at this present moment there is the working of a leaven that will end in idolatry, especially (if there be in this a difference) for the higher orders of this country, who will drag in the lower also. In the humbler classes there is in another way that grossness of love for sensible objects and show that will prepare them for idolatry. But I repeat that there is the active instilling of a spirit, no doubt more subtle and refined in the educated classes, which, in my judgment, will infallibly school them into naturalistic idolatry before many years are over. There is, on the one hand, the material tendency of modern science and literature; there is, on the other, the condescending patronage of times that are past. On these dangerous tracks all that is now energetically leavening the world tends to bring man back to heathenism again; *i.e.*, the apostacy.

However this may be judged by those who hear it, we must remember that there will be also another cause of a most solemn nature, which is plainly revealed: God is going to pour out a judicial delusion on Christendom. It is certain that He will not only inflict severe blows of judgment, but give men up to believe a lie - the great lie of the devil. Here is the great truth of all times: - that God, the God who has now revealed Himself in Christ and by redemption, alone is the due object of worship. So far then is this message, to my mind, from being a strange thing that it appears exactly suitable to man as then situated, and no less to God's wisdom and goodness.

Another consideration perhaps may help some as connected with this, and confirmatory of it, founded

on Matthew 25, where the nations are called up before the Son of man when He sits as King upon the throne. It will be remembered that he tells those whom He designates as the sheep that, inasmuch as they did what they had done to His brethren, it was really to Him; as, on the other hand, the insults fell on Him which were aimed at them. These acts of kindness, or the contrary, will be owned by the Lord here. It is no use for people to call it the general judgment, or the judgment of our works. It is not. The one principle before us in this scripture is His dealing with the living Gentiles, or the nations according to their ways with His brethren; and it will require real power of God to act aright then. The pressure against His messengers will be enormous. If any receive them well, it will be from faith. I grant that the measure of their faith is small. That to honour His brethren is virtually to honour Himself, they do not themselves know. When they stand in presence of the King, how astonished they are that He should regard what was done to the messengers of His gospel in the last days as if done to His own.

Certainly these Gentiles were wrought in by divine grace, yet very evidently they will not be what you would call "intelligent." But then how often must we beware of making too much of this! What a constant snare it is to slip into an unconscious criticism! Men are apt to give themselves an exaggerated importance on the score of their knowledge. God, I am sure, always attaches a far higher value to the heed paid to the Lord Himself, and this too in those that He sends out. It is always a crucial test. It will be so then most of all, because these messages will go forth to the nations on the earth when, growingly lifted up and self-satisfied, they are summoned by messengers, poor and contemptible in their eyes, who will solemnly proclaim the kingdom just coming - the King who is coming in person to judge the quick apart from and before the judgment of the dead. But some souls here and there will receive them, not only treating them kindly, but this because they receive the message. The power of the Spirit of God alone will give them this faith. None less than God Himself will incline their heart. Accordingly the Lord will refer to this reception, or the kindness that accompanied it, as an evidence of their heeding Himself in the persons of His messengers.

This I consider to be similar, if not the same, as the everlasting gospel; indeed it is called by Matthew the "gospel of the kingdom." I am inclined to infer that the "gospel of the kingdom" and the "everlasting gospel" are substantially identical; and that it was thus described because it was always in the purpose of God to establish this kingdom over the world, and to bless man himself here below. This Matthew, in accordance with his design, calls rather the "gospel of the kingdom," because Christ is going to be King. John, it would seem, calls it the "everlasting gospel," because it is in contrast with special messages from time to time, as well as with all that had to do with man as he is here below. At this most corrupt time, then, the message will be sent forth, and certain souls will receive it by God's grace.

Thus the second scene in the chapter is the proclamation of the everlasting gospel unto those settled down on the earth, and to the nations, etc., as the first section was the separation of a remnant of Jews to the Lamb on mount Zion.

The third section, which may be passed over with comparatively few words, is a warning respecting the fall of Babylon. An angel comes forth, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, the great city, which made all the nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

The fourth is a warning about the beast. "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark on his forehead, or on his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled without mixture in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up unto ages of ages: and they have no rest day and night, who worship the beast and his image, and if any one receiveth the mark of his name." So far these divine dealings all go in pairs: as the work among the Jews, and then a final testimony to the Gentiles; then the warning about Babylon, and another about the beast. "Here is the endurance of the saints, that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Then we come to the fifth, which is rather different. It is a declaration, that "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth." From this time nobody that belongs to the Lord is going to die, and those that die in the Lord (*i.e.* in fact all who have thus died) are just on the point of blessedness, not by personal exemption but by the first resurrection and the reign with the Lord, which will terminate all further persecution and death for His name. The wicked must pay the wages of sin, and be destroyed by the judgments of God; but there shall be no more dying in the Lord after this. As a class these are to be blessed (not to die) henceforth. "And I heard a voice out of heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed [are] the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they shall rest from their labours; for their works do follow with them." There is an end of such sorrow and labour: the Lord is going to take the world and all things in hand.

Accordingly in the next scene "I saw, and, behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sitting like unto [the] Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send thy sickle, and reap; for the hour is come to reap; for the harvest of the earth is dried. And he that sat on the cloud thrust his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." It is not here a question of gathering in. The Son of man is seen with the crown of gold, King of righteousness, not yet manifested as King of peace.

And then the close of all the scenes comes. "And another angel came out of the temple that is in heaven, having himself also a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, that had authority over the fire; and called with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripened." This goes farther. For the harvest the call was out of the temple; here it is out of the temple that is in heaven. It is not only wrath on earth but from heaven. And another angel comes out from the altar (*i.e.*, the place of human responsibility, where God manifests Himself to sinners in the sacrifice of Christ, judging sins but in grace). So much the more tremendous His vengeance on the earthly religionists who despise Christ and the cross in deed if not in word. This angel has authority over the fire, the sign of detective and consuming judgment. In short, we have here the harvest and the vintage, - the two great forms of the judgment at the close; the harvest being that judgment that discerns between the just and the unjust, and the vintage being the infliction of unmingled wrath on apostate religion, "the vine of the earth," which is the object of God's special abhorrence.

It is plain, therefore, that here we have seven distinct acts in which God will interfere in the way of forming a testimony, of warnings to the world and comfort to His people, and finally of judging the results as far as the quick are concerned.

Revelation 15

But a very peculiar scene is described in Rev. 15, and Rev. 16. On this one need not now bestow more than a few words. "I saw another sign in heaven." It is clearly connected with what we have had in Rev. 12. "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, the last; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." You will observe that it is not yet the coming of Christ. This is of importance to show the structure of this portion of the book. We must carefully beware of supposing that the seven bowls are after the Son of man is come for the harvest and the vintage of the earth. We shall find, so far from this being the case, that the vision must go back, - I do not say to the beginning of Rev. 14, but before the end of it. The very last of the bowls, the seventh, is the fall of Babylon. Now that act of judgment would correspond to the third dealing of God in chapter 14. The first was the separation of the Jews; the second the everlasting gospel to the Gentiles; and the third the fall of Babylon. Thus the last bowl only brings us up to the same point. Hence the bowls must not in any way be supposed to follow after chapter 14, but only after its earlier part at the utmost. This is important, because it may help some to gather a juster idea how to place chronologically the various portions of the book. The last bowl is also the last outpouring of God's wrath before the Lord Jesus Christ comes.

Consequently it must precede the latter part of that chapter. It synchronizes, we have seen, with the third out of its seven consecutive sections. The end of chapter 16 does not in point of time fall lower than the third step in those of chapter 14. The fourth probably, but certainly the fifth, sixth, and seventh are events necessarily subsequent to all the bowls.

Let us look then a little into the subject. "I saw as it were a sea of glass." but here it is distinguished in its accompaniments from the description in Rev. 4. There the elders were seen on thrones, with the sea of glass bearing its silent but strong testimony that these saints had done with earthly need and danger, - that those who required the washing of water by the word are not contemplated in this scene. This is all intelligible and even plain. When the glorified saints are caught up to heaven, they no longer require what was set forth by the laver and its water to purify; for the sea of glass attests that the purity was fixed. The fact is, that they were beyond the scene where water was needed to cleanse their daily defilements.

Here it is not merely a sea of glass, but mingled with fire. What does this teach? It declares, in my opinion, that these saints passed through a time of fearful fiery tribulation, as did not the elders. The absence of the fire in connection with the elders is just as significant as the presence of fire in connection with the saints in collision with the beast and the false prophet, of whom we are now speaking. If people ask you, "Are the saints to pass through the time of tribulation? The right answer is, What saints do you mean? If you mean those that are presented by the elders caught up at Christ's coming, clearly they will not. Scripture is positive. If you only mean that some saints are to pass through that tremendous time, it is unquestionable. In short, we have only to distinguish, and all becomes perfectly plain: by confounding the two classes all is made a mass of obscurity. But scripture cannot be broken.

Here then we find a sea of glass mingled with fire. "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and those that have gained the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God." The victory over the beast is never predicated of the elders in any sort; nor is there any connection with the elders here. It is a closing scene of fearful trial. This is important. The victories here are confined to the time when Satan's last plans become consummated. These were delivered from them probably before the beast falls. At any rate, the time does not seem of prime importance, but the fact is undeniable that these conquerors belong exclusively to the time of the last efforts of the devil through the beast and the false prophet. They are strictly speaking therefore Apocalyptic saints, and the final company of them. It will be recollected that in our last lecture we saw the first sufferers. Although these may have fallen under the hand of the Roman Empire, they really got the victory over it, and are here seen standing on the sea of glass having harps of God. Their melody in praise of the Lord was none the worse for the sea of tribulation through which they had passed into His presence.

"And they sing the song of Moses, servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Thus it is plain that they are not Christians in the strict sense of the word. Assuredly they are saints in the most real sense, but not standing in the relations which now subsist; they are not to have that sort of bond which is made good by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in those who are now in association with Christ. So exclusive is it that those who may have been under Moses are under him no more; they own no master or head save Christ, Whereas the souls of whom we read here still retain their link with Jewish things, though beyond a doubt they serve God and the Lamb. Hence we hear of them "saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King" - not "of saints," but "of nations." There is no such thing in scripture as "King of saints." This is one of the worst readings of the vicious received text of the Revelation. I do not hesitate to say, both that it is against the best witnesses, and that it conveys a heterodox meaning, and is consequently mischievous. For what can go more practically to destroy the proper relationship of the saints of the Lord? Elsewhere we never hear of such a thing as "King of saints," nor has it any just sense. To the saints the Lord Jesus stands undoubtedly as their Lord

and master; but *king* is a relationship with a nation living on the earth. It is not at all a connection that pertains to the new man. Besides, these if martyred belong actually to heaven, where such a relationship would be strange indeed. Thus it is strange doctrine as well as a fictitious reading. The allusion is to Jeremiah 10: 7. There you will find "king of nations," with other words which are cited here. If these saints were not exclusively Gentiles, at least they comprehended such; and this has to be borne in mind in reading the passage. The true title then is "king of Gentiles" or of "nations." No doubt King of the Jews He is; but those in particular who were Gentiles themselves would and ought to rejoice in being able to praise Him as the King of nations.

"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee" (here again it is not Israel, but *all nations* shall come); "for thy judgments are made manifest." They are anticipating the triumph that is reserved for God in the day of the glory of Christ's coming.

"And after that I saw, and there was opened the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven: and the seven angels came out of the temple, that had the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth unto the ages of the ages. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no one was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." It is not now the ark of God's covenant seen in the opened temple. It is characterised as the tabernacle of the testimony, and judgments follow on apostate Gentiles, not the revelation of the divine counsels touching Israel.

Revelation 16

Then (Rev. 16) we have these seven bowls poured out. It is not now "the third" as under the trumpets, with which the analogy is close; there is no restriction to the western empire of Rome. The whole apostate sphere is smitten, and with yet more severity. The first, as we know, was on the earth; the second on the sea; the third on the rivers and fountains of waters; and the fourth on the sun. Thus all the different departments of nature, whatever may be symbolized by them (and their meaning seems to me neither indeterminate nor obscure), were visited by the bowls of God's wrath.

The three later bowls, like the three woe - trumpets, come to closer quarters with men.

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast. It is clear therefore that we have here a Gentile sphere before us, which fits in with the prefatory scene. "The fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings that are from the sun rising might be prepared." The Euphrates was the boundary that separated the empire on its oriental frontiers from the vast hordes of uncivilized north-eastern nations destined to come into conflict with the powers of the west in the latter day. Thus the way is made plain for them to come forward and enter into the final struggle. This seems the meaning of the drying up of the great river. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of demons, working signs, which go forth unto the kings of the whole habitable earth, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God the Almighty." This gives proof of what I have just now referred to. There is about to be a universal uprising and fight to the death between the east and the west. But the Lord has designs which neither side knows nor regards, and He is no indifferent spectator. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And they" (for I take it so) "gathered them together unto the place called in the Hebrew tongue Armagedon."

Lastly comes the seventh angel, who deals with the world still more decidedly and universally by pouring on the air. "And the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake" - and not only great but unexampled - "such as was not since men were upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great." Clearly, therefore, judgment from heaven becomes yet more unsparing in its blows on man here below. "And the great city came (ejgevneto) into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon was remembered before God." This accounts for the warning of the fall of Babylon referred to in the complete series of God's dealings in Rev. 14. To that Rev. 16 now brings us up in point of time.

This must suffice for tonight, though no more than a sketch of the general bearing of this part of the prophecy.

Rev. 17 - 22

Revelation 17

It is necessary that we should all bear in mind, if we have not observed it before, that Rev. 17 does not pursue the chronological course of the prophecy. It is a description, and not one of the visions that carry us onward. The seventh bowl contained under it the fall of Babylon, which "was remembered before God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

This chapter explains how it was that Babylon was so offensive to God, and wherefore He judged her thus sternly. But, in point of fact, in giving the description of Babylon, the Holy Ghost enters even more into an account of her relations with the beast, the imperial power of which we saw not a little last night. Accordingly these are the two main objects of judgment brought before us in the chapter. It is true, the beast's judgment is only referred to as a defeat under the hand of the Lamb. The particulars are reserved for a later point in this prophecy. We must therefore look a little into the two objects - Babylon and the beast.

The principle is very clear. Man has always sinned in one or other of these two ways, looking now at sin in its broadest forms. The woman - the strange woman - sets forth corruption, human nature indulging itself in its own evil desires, irrespective of God's will. The beast is the expression of the will of man setting itself up in direct antagonism to God. In short, one may be described as corruption, and the other as violence.

There is, however, a great deal more than this on the subject, and given with great precision in scripture, because this is merely the principle of sin in one or other form from the beginning. It will be observed that in this case it is one of the angels that had the seven bowls who comes forward and says to John, "Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore (or harlot) that sitteth upon [the] many waters." There were two particular effects of her evil: the one, illicit commerce with the kings of the earth; the other, intoxicating the inhabitants of the earth with the wine of her fornication.

"So he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness" - a thorough waste as to the knowledge or enjoyment of God. The woman was there seen sitting on a scarlet-coloured beast, i.e., the well-known imperial power of the Roman Empire, - "full of [the] names of blasphemy" in its wicked opposition to God, and clothed with the forms we have already seen - "seven heads and ten horns." The Spirit of God regards it in its final shape and completeness, as far as it was permitted to attain it, "The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls." Everything that could attract the natural man was there; and all that which to him looks fair enough on the side of religion. But she has a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication.* Idolatry is the awful stamp that she bears, and this too both in what she gives to man, and

in what is written on her forehead before God. "Upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth."

*Most copies, it would seem, read th^h gh^h, "of the earth;" the Alex. and others give aujth^h, "of her." The Sinai MS. has both.

Men have been beguiled here and there, and from an early date, to set aside the true bearing of this chapter. Sometimes they have contended for its application to pagan Rome. Sometimes, again, they have sought to turn it aside toward Jerusalem in her corrupt state. But a grave consideration soon disposes of both views by the relation to the beast, and more particularly by what will be shown a little farther on. The application to old pagan Rome is harsh and purposeless enough; but the attempt to refer it to Jerusalem is of all schemes the most absurd; for, far from being borne up by the imperial power, Jerusalem was trodden down by it. If there was any Gentile power since John's day, which did not sustain but persecute and suppress Jerusalem, it was Rome, instead of being a gaudy harlot mounted on that vast empire.

At the same time the attempt to apply Babylon to ancient Rome is almost as unhappy; and for a plain reason. As long as Rome was pagan, there was neither the full bearing of the seven heads, nor did so much as one of the ten horns exist. The decem-regal division of the broken empire in the West, as all know, was long after Rome had ceased to be heathen. Nobody can dispute that this remarkable cluster of kingdoms in Europe was the fruit providentially of the destroyed unity of the Roman empire when the barbarians invaded it. With that love of freedom which they carried from their German forests, they would not allow the one iron rule of the ancient empire to subsist longer, but set up each their own kingdom in the different fragments of the dismembered empire. Thus the attempt to apply it during the pagan period is altogether futile on the face of the matter. We shall find that the scripture affords much light to decide the true bearing of the prophecy, and that no application to the past can possibly satisfy the conditions satisfactorily. If ancient times failed fully to meet the requirements of the chapter, it is evident that the middle ages are passed without its fulfilment as a whole. When we come to the full application of the prophecy, we must look onward to the latter day.

This falls in with what we have seen of the book in general; but I do not deny that certain elements which figure in the Apocalypse then existed and still exist. No one can soberly deny that Babylon in some sort had a place then; but that the special, and above all, the full character of Babylon was manifested as here portrayed is another matter. We may surely say *her* cup was not yet full. There was not yet fairly out before men what God foresaw as that which must finally provoke His judgment. Again, to my mind it seems demonstrably true that the relation to the beast here brought before us must in all fairness be allowed to look onward to a later stage of Babylon. Thus there is no question that some of the actors in the final scenes of the great drama were already there, as the reigning city, and the Roman empire. Moral elements too were not wanting: the mystery of lawlessness had long been at work, though the enemy had not yet brought in the apostacy, and still less the manifestation of the lawless one. But whatever subsisted then, that which the Spirit here presents as a whole cannot be found realized at any point of time in the past. We must perforce therefore look for a still more complete development before the Lamb judges the beast after the ten horns along with it shall have destroyed Babylon.

There is another remark to make. It is hard to see how Roman city, or anything civil connected with it, could be called "mystery." It is partly because of this that many excellent men have endeavoured to apply the vision to Romanism; and I admit that there is found a measure of analogy. That religious system has an incomparably nearer connection with this mysterious harlot than anything we have yet spoken of. There is no doubt that Rome in some form is the woman described in the chapter: the seven heads or hills clearly point to that city, which of all cities might best and indeed alone be known as ruling over the kings of the earth. There is therefore much to be said for the Protestant application of the chapter as compared with the Praetorist theory of pagan Rome. Yet it will be found imperfect, for

reasons which, I think, will be clear to any unbiassed mind.

There stands the solemn brand graven, not on the blasphemous beast, but on the forehead of its rider, "Mystery, Babylon the great." The question is, why is she thus designated? If only an imperial city, what has this to do with mystery? The simple fact of conquering far and wide, and of exercising vast political power in the earth, does not constitute any title to such a name. A mystery clearly points to something undiscoverable by the natural mind of man - a secret that requires the distinct and fresh light of God to unravel, but which when revealed thus is plain enough. And so it is with this very Babylon that comes before us here. Justly does she gather her title from the old fountain of idols and of combined power without God: confusion being here the characteristic element, the designation is taken from the renowned city of the Chaldeans, the first spot notorious in both respects.

But the attempt, again, to apply what is said here to a future city of Babylon in Chaldea seems to me no less vain. There is a distinct contrast between the city John describes and the ancient Babylon, in that the latter was built on the plain of Shinar, while the former is expressly said to have seven heads, and these explained to mean seven mountains. I admit that there may be something more in the symbol than the literal hills of Rome, because they are said to be also seven kings. At the same time we are not at liberty to eliminate such a feature out of the description. It is written to be believed, not to be ignored or explained away.

In short, it would seem that God has hedged round His own draft of Babylon so as to make it quite plain that Rome, city and system, figures in the scene; and this too necessarily involving a medieval description, though the full result will not be till the end of the age; for she rides the beast or empire characterized so as naturally to involve the past barbarian irruption and the resulting ten-kingdomed state. Again, that it supposes Rome after it had professed the name of Christ I think is not to be doubted, if only from the expression "mystery" attached to Babylon. It clearly contrasts this mystery with another. We have not to learn what the other mystery means; we know well that it is according to God and godliness. But here is a mystery altogether different: - "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth."

Here were joined good and evil in godless union, for the worse, not for the better, - this alliance, unholy in principle, irremediable therefore in practice, between God and the natural man, who substitutes rites for the grace and word of God, for the blood of Christ, and the power of the Spirit, and employs the name of the Lord as a cover for grosser covetousness and ambition, yet more aspiring than the vulgar world. All these things have their place in Babylon the great. She is, the mother of the harlots, but also (and with still deeper guilt) of the abominations of the earth. This brings in idolatry, real shameless idolatry too, not merely that subtle working of the idolatrous spirit that every Christian has to guard against. Here it is the positive worship of the creature besides the Creator, yea, and notoriously more than He. For who knows not the horrors of Mariolatry? Babylon is the parent of the "abominations of the earth." It is not therefore a question of virtual idols suitable to ensnare the children of God, but of that which is adapted to the earth itself, - thorough-going palpable idolatry.

Such is God's account of Babylon the great. Take notice of this (which confirms the application just now contended for), that when John saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, he wondered with great wonder. Had it been simply a persecution from pagans, what was there to wonder at in their deadly hatred of the truth and of those who confess it? That an openly heathen metropolis, devoted to the worship of Mars, and Jupiter, and Venus, and other wicked monstrosities of pagan mythology should be irritated with the gospel which exposes it all, and should consequently seek to injure the faithful, was to be expected, and a necessary result, directly that the uncompromising spirit of Christ was known. Had those who preached said nothing about heathen vanities, had they merely presented the gospel as a better thing than anything the pagans could boast, I do not doubt that the pagans themselves would have acknowledged thus much. And it is pretty well

ascertained that there was a discussion among them, even to the suggestion by one of the most wicked of their emperors, whether Christ should not be owned and worshipped in the Pantheon, hundreds of years before Constantine, indeed from the earliest epoch of the gospel. But there never was the thought of giving Christ the only place He could take. For Christ has not only a supreme but an exclusive place. Now there was nothing more repulsive and fatal to paganism in every form than the truth revealed in Christ, which exposed every thing that was not itself - not the truth, definite and exclusive. Consequently Christianity, as being directly aggressive on the falsehood of heathenism, was of all things the most offensive to Rome. That pagan Rome, therefore, should set itself against Christianity was to be expected, and so the fact proved.

But it was no such evil which astounded the prophet. He was filled with astonishment that this mysterious form of evil, this counter-testimony of the enemy (not antichrist, but antichurch), should seem and be largely accepted as the holy catholic church of God, that Christendom, if not Christianity, should at the same time become the bitterest of persecutors, more murderously incensed against the witnesses of Jesus and the saints of God than ever paganism had been in any country or all ages. This very naturally filled him with intense wonder.

"And the angel said unto him, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman." Had he really penetrated under the surface, and seen that beneath the fair guise of Christendom the woman was, of all things under the sun, the most corrupt and hateful to God, it would not be so much to be surprised at. Therefore says the angel, "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, that hath* the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, beholding the beast that he was, and is not, and shall be present." The closing phrase here is the description of the beast in its last state, in which it will come into collision with Babylon. Let us bear this in mind. It will help to show us that, whatever may have been the past conditions of Babylon, there is a future one; and it is in that future one that Babylon is to perish. For remark, the beast or Roman empire is described here as that which once existed, which then ceased to exist, and which assumes a final shape when it reappears from the bottomless pit. Bad as pagan Rome was, it would be false to affirm that it ever had come out of the bottomless pit. When the apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Rome, he particularly specified at that very time the duty of absolute subjection on the part of Christians to the powers which then were. Of course the application to the Roman empire would be immediately in the mind of any Christian at Rome. There was no doubt at all of the character of the emperor; there never had been a worse than he; yet God took that very opportunity to lay this on the Christians as their duty to the worldly authority outside and over them. It was ruled in general that the worldly powers were ordained of God. But this is not to emerge from the bottomless pit.

*The description here is simply character, not dates. If a person drew from this, for instance, that the boast was to carry the woman, Babylon, *when* it had as a fact all that is meant by the seven heads and the ten horns, it would be an error. The angel implies nothing of the sort. It is a question here of distinctive character, apart from that of time, for which we must search other scriptures.

But there is a time coming when power will cease to be ordained of God; and this is the point to which the last condition of the beast refers. God in His providence did sanction the great empires of old; and the principle continues as long as the church is here below. Hence we have to own the divine source of government even when its holders abandon all such thoughts themselves, and maintain their rule in the world as a thing flowing from the people irrespective of God. But the day is coming when Satan will be allowed to have things his own way. For a short time (what a mercy that it must be only for a short time!) Satan will bring forth an empire suited to his purposes, as it springs from Satanic principles which deny God; and this is part of what appears to be meant by the beast ascending out of the bottomless pit.

It "shall go into perdition," it is therefore added, "and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present." "Yet is" is a most unfortunate expression. It is the fault, however, of the bad Greek text of Erasmus, Stephens, etc. It should be, "and shall be present."* There is no thought of making such a paradox to perplex the mind. The true reading here is neither hard nor doubtful save to unbelief. There is no paradox in the message whatever. It is all plain and simple - "the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present."

* Even the Complutensian editors give the right text here; and it would seem that Erasmus failed to use his MS. aright. For according to unquestionable testimony the Reuchlinian copy has kai pavresti like some half-dozen cursives, which was probably a mistake for pavrestai.

But all this will be a great reversal of man's history and political maxims. There never has been a like experience. What empire has existed, then sunk, and finally reappeared, with higher pretensions and power, only to perish horribly? It is altogether foreign to history. One of the most approved axioms is, that kingdoms are just like men in this respect, that they begin, rise, and fall. As man does not believe in the resurrection of man, it is no wonder that he does not believe in the resurrection of an empire. The chief difference is that in man's case it is God who raises him, whereas in the empire's not God but the devil will raise it again. Beyond controversy, however, it is a most unusual and abnormal reappearance, which is altogether exceptional in the history of the world. Accordingly the resuscitated Roman empire will carry men away by a storm of wonder at its revival. Little do they know, because they believe not what is here written, that it is about to come out of the abyss or bottomless pit. That is, Satan will be the spring of its final rise and power; he, and not God in any way whatever, will give it its character.

"And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there (or they) are seven kings." I have already touched on the double force of the symbol - mountains. "Five are fallen, one is, the other hath not yet come." That is, the sixth head (reigning then in John's day) was the imperial form of government. Nothing of the sort can be plainer. We have here a note of time of signal value. A seventh should follow; and what is more, the seventh was in one aspect to be an eighth. "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is an eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth unto destruction." In one sense it would be an eighth, and in another sense it would be of the seven; the eighth perhaps because of its extraordinary resurrection character, yet one of the seven because it is outwardly old imperialism again. This explains, it seems to me, the wounded head that was afterwards healed. It is of the seven in that point of view, because it is imperialism; but it is an eighth, because it has a diabolical source when raised up again. In this way there never has been anything of the kind before.

"And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have not yet received a kingdom; but they receive authority as kings (not at but for) one hour with the beast." They are all to reign concurrently with the beast. This also is a no less important element for understanding the chapter. All who have looked back on the history know, that when the ten kings appeared, there was no beast or imperial power. It was the destruction of the imperial unity of Rome that gave occasion for the well-known ten kingdoms which the barbarians set up afterwards. I am not raising any question about the ten. We know that sometimes there were nine, sometimes eleven or more; but supposing this all perfectly certain, I affirm that, according to history, they did not receive their power as kings for one and the same time with the beast. This is the meaning of "one hour with the beast."

The very reverse is the undeniable fact. They received their power as kings when the beast ceased to exist. Thus the difference is complete between past history (if we look at the extinction of the empire and the rise of the ten kingdoms) and the certain fulfilment of the prophecy in the future, when we look at what God has really told us. I do not acknowledge the language to be either difficult or ambiguous. Man alone is to blame who has misapplied it. Yet one allows freely a partial application already. We can quite understand that God would comfort His people in the dark ages by this book; and a very imperfect

glimpse at its real meaning might in His grace serve to cheer them on in their trials as far as it went. From Rome saints had suffered; and it was easy to see that the revealed persecutress is called Babylon, and identified with the governing city of Rome. So far they were right. Nor is there any real reason to wonder at their deriving help from partial light. It was but an imperfect view they got even of justification; a far scantier perception, if they could be said to have had any, about Christ's Headship of the church, His priesthood, or almost anything else. And thus it was but a little glimpse they had of prophecy. But we can understand that the Lord could and did make that little go far, and do no little good.

But is there any reason why we should content ourselves with the measure enjoyed of old? Such is the hard bondage which mere historical tradition imposes on its votaries. Holding on to what others knew before them, or little more, they reduce themselves to a minimum of the truth. When God is so gracious, His word rich, full, and deep, it does seem sad to see His children content with just enough to save their souls, or keep them from positive starvation. In presence of grace I do not think this is for His glory, any more than for their own blessing. The only right principle in everything is to go to the source of divine truth, and to seek there refreshment and strength and fitness for whatever our God calls us to. And unquestionably God has been awakening the attention of His people in a remarkable manner to the value of His word, and not least of all to the portion we are now examining.

It is plain that what the verse contemplates is neither the Roman power when there was one head of the empire, nor the eastern or Byzantine part of it after that partition, nor the western state of division under the kings who succeeded the deposition of Augustulus; for in the medieval state there may have been ten kings (in contrast with the ancient state of the beast without them but no beast or imperial system with its chiefs. This is what drove men to the idea of making the pope to be the beast. But that idea is wholly insufficient to cover or meet the word of God, which gives clear and strong reasons that prove the mistake of applying this to the pope as its complete fulfilment. For that which comes distinctly before us in this one verse is the twofold fact, that the ten horns here contemplated receive their kingly power for the same hour or time as the beast, and not subsequently, when his rule was extinguished. He gets his power and they get theirs for one and the same time.

This disposes of many a web of comments; for we find at once what is perfectly simple, what any child of God who believes this to be the word of God must own. Bringing in history here embroiled the subject; and those who appeal most to its evidence are the very men who seem in this to ignore its facts. But the most ordinary knowledge suffices; for who does not know from the Bible that there was a Roman empire when Christ was born, one emperor, and no such state as that empire divided into ten kingdoms? We find a decree going forth that all the world shall be enrolled. Of course there must needs be a consultation with the kings, when the kings exist and become an accredited part of that empire, as rulers subordinate to the beast. But no; it was an absolute decree that went forth, and this indisputably, from a single head of the undivided empire. Centuries after came in, not only the division into east and west, but the broken up state of the west, when there ceased to be an imperial chief. But the prophecy shows us the beast revived and the separate kings reigning for the same time, before divine judgment destroys them at the coming of Christ and His saints. Hence this certainly must be future.

How this precisely fits in, let me say, with the state of feeling in these modern times; for "constitutionalism," as men call it, is the fruit of the Teutonic system supervening on that of the broken up Roman empire. It was the barbarians who brought in the prevalent ideas of liberty as well as feudalism, and accordingly it is they that have firmly stood for freedom; so that all the efforts to reconstitute the empire which have been tried over and over again have hitherto issued in total failure. The reason is manifest there is a hinderer - "one that letteth." It cannot be done till the moment comes. When its own season arrives, as it surely will, the divine hindrance is to be removed, and the devil then is allowed to do his worst. The political side of this is described here with surprising brightness and

brevity. The ten horns with the beast are all to receive authority - the beast of course wielding the imperial power, they as kings, all during one and the same time before the end comes. Clearly, therefore, it is future. It is impossible to refer it to the past with any show even of reasonable probability, I will not say of reality or truth. Scripture and facts refute all such theories.

"They have one mind, and give their own power and authority to the beast." Hitherto the reverse of this has been true in history. The horns have constantly opposed each other, and even sometimes the pope. Since then the world has not seen the imperial power to which all bow. Have we not all heard of the balance of power? This is what nations have been constantly occupied with, lest any one power should become the beast. If some few have joined on one side, some are sure to help the other, because they are jealous of any one acquiring such a preponderant authority: and power as to govern the rest. But in the time really contemplated here all this political shuffling will be over. "These have one mind, and give their own power and authority to the beast," or their imperial leader. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them (for he is Lord of lords and King of kings), and they that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful."

But still we have not the end of Babylon yet. Her part in the corruption of the high and the intoxication of the low - her idolatrous character - has come before us. We have seen her connection with the beast; but there is a conflict coming. The woman was allowed to ride the beast - to influence and govern the empire first, but at last to be the object of hatred to the ten horns and the beast, who expose, rob, and destroy her. "And he saith to me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Such was her influence stretching out far beyond the beast.

The Gothic hordes were not yet incorporated with the empire, still less were they horns of the beast, nor did they give their power to it, but destroyed it rather. They broke up the beast yet more than Babylon. Past history therefore in no way suits the prophecy. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast." Here I am obliged to say that our authorized version, and not merely it, but our common Greek Testaments, are altogether wrong. This is known so well, and on such decided grounds, that it would be unbecoming to withhold the fact. There is no uncertainty whatever in the case. It is certain that we ought to read (not "upon" but) "*and** the beast." This is of great importance. The horns and the beast join in hating the whore. Not only are they supposed to be coexistent, but united in their change of feeling against Babylon. The friendships of the evil are not lasting. "These shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." It is not the gospel, nor the Holy Spirit, but the lawless revived Latin empire with its vassal kingdoms of the west, that combine and destroy Babylon. Unhallowed love will end in hatred. They will then treat her with contempt and shameful exposure. Next they will seize her resources. Finally they will destroy her. Can anything be less reasonable (even taking that ground, low as it is) than that the various rulers of the western powers, Catholic kings, join the Pope in destroying his own city, or his own church, whichever Babylon may be made? Some evade the difficulty by referring the desolation to the Gothic powers; and these Protestants, as if they were mere Praeterists! What confusion! Is not this reason enough for saying that not even the shadow of solid ground appears for the system?

*It now appears that the Cod. Reuchlin. Capnionis, which was used by Erasmus, and lately discovered after a long obscurity by Dr. Delitzsch, reads kai; (not ejpi;) to; q. as the Complut. Polyglot, and all editions of the least critical value. Scholz's note ("rec. cum cdd. pl.") is a myth. I am not aware of any MS. in its favour, though some versions represent it.

Hence the effort of some to prop up a manifestly false reading. It is due to the exigency of a notion which fears and is irreconcilable with the truth in this place. "The ten horns which thou sawest AND the beast" would give unquestionably the right form of the verse.

Thus everything implies their simultaneous presence for the same time and common action with the

beast, in plundering and then destroying Babylon. God uses them for this object,-the setting aside of her, the great religious corruptress, whose centre is found at Rome. We can easily understand that the overthrow of the ecclesiastical power is necessary to leave a full field unimpeded for the imperial power to develop itself in its final form of violence and rebellion and apostacy against the Lord. Yet religion, be it ever so corrupt, acts as a restraint on human will, as a government does, however evil. Even the worst of governments is better than none. That a corrupt religion is better than none I will not say: at any rate it troubles men; it is a thorn in the side of those who want no religion at all. Hence the horns and the beast join together and desolate the harlot. That kings had dallied with her, that the beast had once borne her up, will only turn to gall the more bitter to her, who, faithless to God, had staked the usurped and abused name of Christ to win what was now lost for ever. "For God put [it] into their hearts to do his mind, and to do one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." It is a time of strong delusion, be it remembered.

"And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, that hath kingship over the kings of the earth." None but Rome corresponds. "The woman" is the more general symbol designating her as the great imperial city; "the harlot" is her corrupt religious character, embracing papal Rome, but not ending with Popery as it is.

Revelation 18

Revelation 18 need not delay us long. It is a description, not of Babylon's relation to the beast, but of the city's fall, with certain dirges put into the mouth of the different classes that groan because of her extinction here below. But along with that God warns of her ruin, and calls on His people (verse 4) to come out of her. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sin., have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Then the word is, "Award her even as she awarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she mixed, mix to her double. In as many things as she glorified herself, and lived luxuriously, so much torment and sorrow give to her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am not a widow, and I shall in no wise see sorrow."

That is, Babylon is viewed in this chapter not so much in her mysterious and religious form, giving currency to every kind of confusion of truth and error, of good and evil, intoxicating, corrupting, and seducing, as all can see, through her wickedly religious influence; but she is viewed here as the most conspicuous aider and abettor of the world in its luxuries and delights and the pride of life, - of what men call "civilization." This is accordingly traced in our chapter with considerable detail, and with the sorrow and vexation of all the different classes who on the fall of Babylon groaned over her destruction, and the loss of their wealth and enjoyment.

But the graphic account does not end until the Spirit of God shows us another view of Babylon altogether. A mighty angel takes a stone and says, when he cast it into the sea, "Thus with violence shall be thrown down Babylon the great city, and shall be found no more at all." The reason is given at the close; not only "by thy sorcery were all the nations deceived," but above all "in her was found [the] blood of prophets and saints, and of all the slain upon the earth."

What a solemn and weighty fact in the government of God! How can it be said that this vile, corrupt, idolatrous system of the last days was guilty of the blood of all martyrs? She followed and had inherited the spirit of all, from the days of Cain, who had lifted up their hands against their righteous brethren. Instead of taking warning from the wickedness of those before her, who had seduced on the one hand, and persecuted on the other, she had, when she could, gone on increasing in both, until at last the blow of divine judgment came. It is thus that God is wont to deal as a rule in His judgments, - not necessarily on the one that first introduces an evil, but on those that inherit the guilt, and perhaps aggravate it, instead of taking warning by it. And when God does judge, it is not merely for the evil of those then

judged, but of all from the first budding of it till that day. This is not unrighteous, but, on the contrary, the highest justice from a divine point of view.

We may illustrate it by the members of a family. Supposing, for instance, a drunken father: if the sons had one spark of right feeling, not only must they feel the utmost shame and pain on account of their parent, but they would endeavour (like the sons of Noah who had a due sense of what was proper to their father) to cast some mantle of love over that which they could not deny, yet would not look at, but surely above all things they would watch against that shameful sin. But alas! there is a son in the family, who, instead of being admonished by his father's wickedness, takes license from it to indulge the same. On him the blow comes, not on the wretched parent. The son is doubly guilty, because he saw his father's nakedness and felt it enough to hide. But he ought to have withstood it - I do not mean in vengeance (for that belongs to the Lord), but as holily hating the sin itself, yet withal in the deepest compassion for his parent. But far from that he has, on the contrary, persevered in the same evil course, as badly or worse than his father. Then and thus is aggravated guilt in the case of this wicked son.

It is a precisely similar case here. Babylon had once heard the varied testimony of God; for what had she not heard of truth? The gospel had been preached there, as she of Chaldea was not without law and prophet. Babylon must hear, I do not doubt, the final testimony of God - the gospel of the kingdom that is to go forth in the last days; but she loves her pleasure and power, and refuses truth. She will despise everything really divine; she will only use whatever of God's word she can pervert for increasing her own importance, and gaining a greater ascendancy over the consciences of men, and enjoying herself more luxuriously in this world; for she will go far to obliterate all remembrance of heaven, and to make this world a kind of paradise which she embellishes, not with pure and undefiled religion, but with the arts of men and the idolatries of the world.

This it is precisely which will bring out the indignant judgment of God upon the last phase of Babylon, so that the guilt of all the blood shed on the earth shall be imputed to her, and she may be judged accordingly. It does not hinder, of course, that in the judgment of the dead each man is judged for his own sin. This remains true. The day of the Lord on the world in no way sets aside His dealing with individual souls. The judgment of the *dead* is strictly individual, judgments in this world are not. His blows on this world come more nationally as on Israel; incomparably more severe, as in possession of greater privileges, is the judgment of corrupt Christendom, or Babylon as it is called here. But according to His principle of government it is not merely personal guilt, but that which, from despising the testimony of God, is thus morally accumulating from age to age in the ratio of the testimony of God and the wickedness that has been indulged by men in spite of it. This may suffice for Rev. 18.

Revelation 19

"After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great crowd in heaven, saying, Alleluia, the salvation, and the glory, and the power of our God: for true and righteous [are] his judgments: because he judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And they said Alleluia a second time; and her smoke goeth up unto the ages of the ages." The Spirit of God contrasts with the fall of Babylon the marriage. of the bride, the Lamb's wife. Babylon was the spurious church as long as it was a question of the church, and the final corrupter when it could be no question of this longer, and there went forth the closing testimony of God. I do not doubt that there was a corrupt form in connection with Israel in times past. That is, there was first the literal Babylon, of course; but here it is symbolical. A mysterious lawlessness inherits the well-known name of Babylon when Rome is brought forward; and it does not merely embrace Christian times, but the end of the age after the church has gone, when the course of divine judgment comes. Bear this in mind: to leave the last part out is fatal to any accurate understanding of the Revelation.

We find, accordingly, the four and twenty elders and four living creatures here brought before us for the

last time. That is to say, the heavenly saints are viewed still as the heads of the glorified priesthood, and also the executive in the administration of God's judgments. But a voice issues from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were a voice of a great multitude, and as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God the Almighty reigneth.* Let us be glad and exult, and give the glory to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Now we find the symbol of the bride brought before us, and the elders and the living creatures disappear. The bride is in view.

*It is the aorist in Greek, which in such a case as this it is difficult correctly to represent in English; for neither "reigned" nor "hath reigned" could convey that God had entered on His kingdom, but rather that it was past.

Are we then to understand that the elders and the living creatures are together taken absolutely as the bride now? that those who were meant under the figures of the elders and of the living creatures assume the name and figure of the bride? In my opinion it is not absolutely so. The elders do show us the heavenly heads of priesthood (embracing, as I believe, the Old Testament saints and those of the New); *i.e.*, they are not limited to the church, Christ's body. Then, when the Lamb and His purchase by blood are celebrated in heaven, the four living creatures join the elders, though each is distinct. The glorified saints are to administer power in a way far beyond angels. The living creatures are, from Rev. 5 coupled with the elders, as we find them in the beginning of Revelation 19.

But now, when those symbols disappear, because of a new action of God (namely, the consummation of the church's joy), the elders and the living creatures disappear, and we have not the bride alone, but another class of saints, who at once come forward. "And to the bride was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints." I say "righteousnesses," not "righteousness." It is not what Christ puts on them, but a recognition even at this time of whatever has been of God - the working I do not deny of the Spirit of Christ. But it is what each saint has, though the blessed thought here is that the church has it not merely in the way of each person possessing his own; the bride has the whole of it (that is, the church in glory). The individual has his own fruit too. This remains true also in its own place, as we shall find; and when it is a question of reward, this is precisely the grand point; but when it is a question of the bride above, that is the way in which it is presented here, as we may see clearly from verse 8. The Spirit of God implies that it is decidedly not the righteousness here which is by another, and we thereby imputed righteous, but righteousnesses personal and actual. Of course the other is true. Before God we have that which is found only by and in Christ, which is another and a higher character altogether as compared with the righteousnesses of the saints.

Besides the bride thus arrayed, "He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb." Here you may see the reason for saying that the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures are not absolutely the church, because when that symbol applies, and the one of the bride comes forward, we have got others too. What I judge, then, is that the guests, or those that were called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, refer clearly to the Old Testament saints. If so, they are there in the quality not of the bride, but of those invited to the marriage of the Lamb; but I do not think them the Apocalyptic saints for the simple reason that, as shown in the next chapter, the Apocalyptic saints are not raised from the dead yet. These remain as yet in the condition of separate spirits. That is not at all the way in which the guests are spoken of. I think, therefore, that the elders and the living creatures comprehend both the Old Testament saints and the church, the bride of Christ, - that consequently, when the bride is mentioned, there were these others who had been included in the elders and the living creatures, but who are now seen as a separate body. No doubt all this may seem to some a little difficult, but it is no use evading what is hard. We must face difficulties; we must bow to the word; we must seek to learn through all. We do not mend matters by hasty conclusions, we only complicate

the truth. And it appears to me that here we are bound to account for the presence of these others that are at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, but appear as guests, and not at all in the quality of the bride. In general this has been either passed over in the chapter, or some unsatisfactory inference has been flung out, which can only embroil the prophecy. I do not, of course, complain of particular persons, but of the general vagueness in which the passage has been taken - unless, indeed, the more common course be not to ignore it.

Then the prophet falls down to pay homage to the angel; and this gives rise to a weighty admonition. It is not only that the angel corrects the act by asserting that he is a fellow-servant of him and of his brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. On that account it was altogether out of place to pay homage to him instead of to the God who had sent him to serve. But he tells us further that the Spirit of prophecy, who prophesies in this book, is the testimony of Jesus. Thus the divine testimony is not confined to the gospel or the church, but the prophetic Spirit which characterizes the Revelation as a whole, after the church is translated, is equally a testimony of Jesus. This is most important, because it might be (as it has been) forgotten by some who make the gospel and the corresponding presence of the Spirit to be the same at all times; as others have thought, because Rev. 4 and sequel treat of Jew and Gentile, and the state of the world under God's judgments, that this cannot be a testimony of Jesus at all. But it really is. "The Spirit of prophecy" - and such it is all through the Revelation after the seven churches are done with - "is the testimony of Jesus." We know the Holy Spirit rather as a spirit of communion with Christ. By and by, after our translation to heaven, He will work, and as vitally in those who bow to God, when it will be the reception of the prophetic testimony which is here owned to be none the less the testimony of Jesus.

Then heaven is opened, and for a sight most solemn. It is not now the temple opened there, and the ark of the covenant seen when Israel's security is seen, as the object of God's counsels; nor is it a door opened above, as we saw it when the prophet was giving his introduction to the prophecy of God's dealings with the world as a whole, though in both cases all manifestly clusters round the Lord Jesus. But now heaven is opened for yet graver facts, and of incalculable moment for man and the universe and the enemy. It is Christ Himself about to be displayed in His rights as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and this in the face of the world. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse." Victorious power put forth to subdue is the meaning of the white horse. "And he that sat upon him called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." It is no longer a question of sustaining His saints in grace, but of sovereign power for judging the earth. "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems." There was judicial discernment with the distinct possession of all titles to sovereignty.

"And he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself." He is coming forth in indisputable human glory, but the greatest care is taken to let us know that He had that which was above man - above the creature; for "no man knoweth the Son but the Father." Here it would seem we have just what answers to that: this name none knew but He Himself. He was a divine person, whatever new position He assumes for the world. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." He comes to execute vengeance, and with a sign of death for rebels. "And his name is called The Word of God." He was the word of God in the revelation of grace; when known, by and by, it will be as the executor of God's judgments. He equally expresses what God is. The gospel of John and the Revelation perfectly disclose both, whether in grace or in judgment. "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white, pure."

Here we learn at once of what His train consists. They are glorified saints, and not angels. And this is entirely confirmed by Rev. 17, where it was told us that they are with Him when He comes. When the beast dares to fight with the Lamb He shall overcome the beast; and they that are with Him, "called and chosen and faithful" - terms, as a whole, entirely inapplicable to the angels. The angels are never "called,"

although they may be "chosen;" and though termed holy, I do not recollect that they are ever spoken of as "faithful." "Faithful" is what belongs to a man. It supposes the effect and the exercise of faith. "Called" is most evidently inapplicable, because calling supposes that the person is brought out of one condition and raised into another and a better one. This is never the case with an angel. The fallen angels are not called, and the holy angels never need to be - they are kept. Calling is the fruit of active grace on God's part towards man, and only towards him when fallen. Even man himself when he was innocent in Eden was not called. Directly he had sinned, the word of God came, and he was called. It is very evident, therefore, that the saints in a glorified state are here represented as following the Lord out of heaven. They are not seen here as the bride. This would have been altogether inappropriate for such a progress: when the King comes forth riding to victory in the judgment of wicked men - of the world, it is not in the quality of bride, but of armies or hosts, that the saints follow Him; and these include no doubt the guests as well, *i.e.*, all the glorified take their place in His train.

At the same time you will mark that these are not said to be executors of judgment as Christ is.* It is to *Him* that God has given all judgment - not necessarily to us. We may have a special task in it, but this is not the work for us, as it seems to me. Hence, there is no sword proceeding out of our mouth; nor are the saints or heavenly hosts said to be arrayed in such a sort as the Lord. It is simply said that the glorified are to follow the Lord in victorious power, and nothing more, "clothed in fine linen, white, pure." Angels we know from other scriptures will be there, but of this we hear nothing here. But "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." What makes it the more notable is this, that the rod of iron is promised to us - not the sword. Then there is the reigning power, but not the execution of judgment in this awful fashion which is attributed to the Lord Himself. But He "treadeth the winepress of the fury of the wrath of the Almighty God" - another character of judgment never attributed to the saints, that I know of. "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords."

*It is the more strikingly characteristic, because of such language as Ps. 149: 6-9, which speaks of all the saints contemplated on earth for the day of Jehovah.

Then follows the proclamation of the angel, and the invitation to the supper of the great God, to eat the flesh of all the great ones of the earth. "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, Come, gather yourselves together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat flesh of kings, and flesh of chiliarchs, and flesh of strong [men], and flesh of horses, and of those that sit on them, and flesh of all, both free and bond, both small and great." And then comes the gathering and the battle. "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken" (taken alive), "and with him the false prophet that wrought signs in his presence, with which he deceived those that received the mark of the beast, and those that worshipped his image." Thus the second beast is no longer seen as an earthly power, but as a prophet-of course a false prophet. All the energy to mislead men in the presence of the first beast was long in his hands, and now nothing more is spoken of. The spiritual power is wholly in the hands of the false prophet. It will be understood when one says "spiritual" that none is meant save of a wicked kind.

"Alive the two were cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." Thus eternal judgment was executed at once. They were caught in flagrant treason and rebellion: what further need of any process of judgment whatsoever?

"And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which [sword] proceedeth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh." Their doom was awful, but by no means after the same sort as their two leaders.

Revelation 20

Then another and immensely important act is described - the binding of Satan. He is no longer to be allowed to prowl about the world ensnaring and destroying. "And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." It is not therefore his final judgment. The angel least him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal over him, that he should no more deceive the nations, till the thousand years should be completed: after these things he must be loosed a little time."

And then we come to a most cheering disclosure: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of those beheaded on account of the witness of Jesus, and on account of the word of God: and those who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, and had not received his mark upon their forehead, and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." I do not suppose that many words are required by the present audience to show that we are not to understand the scene as a mere figure of Christianity. There are probably but few, if any, here who do not understand it as the fore-shadow of a real resurrection. In short, it is not tropical language, as when it is said of the prodigal son - "This my son was dead, and is alive again;" or of the restoration of Israel, which is compared to a resurrection from the dead for the rest of the world. Here the vision was of thrones with sitters, and others caused to join them; and the inspired explanation is that it is the first resurrection - the rising of the just from the dead. Let us look at the different groups that are seen to have part in the first resurrection.

First, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." The thrones were already filled. Instead of judgment being executed on them, it was given to them. They themselves were to judge. Who were they? Who are the persons thus invested with judicial authority of so glorious a nature and to reign, as we see later, with Christ? Clearly the same saints whom we have seen first set forth by the elders in heaven, subsequently by the elders and the living creatures, next, by the bride and the living creatures at the marriage-supper, and finally by the armies that followed the Lord out of heaven.

It is no longer a question either of celebrating the ways and counsels of God, or of the war with the beast and king. Accordingly it is another figure. It is reigning. There are thrones filled with certain persons, who reign along with Him. Thus the language of symbol is as definite as any other. There is no lack of precision, but the very reverse. Peculiar energy indeed attaches to symbolic language. But what is also of consequence to observe is, that John saw souls - the souls of those beheaded on account of the witness of Jesus, and on account of the word of God. These are the martyrs of Rev. 6, those long since seen under the altar, poured out like burnt-offerings to God. It will be remembered that it was said to them that they must wait. They had cried to the Sovereign ruler to avenge their blood on their foes, but they were told they must wait a little for some others, their fellow-servants and their brethren, to die as they had. Here accordingly we have them all. For there follows another company of martyrs who suffered when the beast set up his worst and final pretensions. When the second beast appeared, he even strove to put to death those who would not worship the beast, nor pay homage to his image, nor receive his mark. These compose the third class here spoken of.

The first were such as came out of heaven after Christ, being already raised from the dead and glorified. Consequently they sat upon the thrones at once; while the two latter classes, described in the rest of the verse, were still in the separate state - "and the souls." Take this quite simply and literally. It does not mean persons merely, but the souls of beheaded persons. He saw their condition: it was part of the vision.

Here were thrones, and people sat upon them, changed 'before this into the image of Christ's glory. Then come others in the condition of separate spirits or souls, whom the prophet saw - two different classes of them - those beheaded for the witness of Jesus and the word of God, and those who refused the beast in every form, The proof of the third class should have been given a little more distinctly than in our

version. It should not be "*and which had not,*" but rather, "*and those* who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, neither had received his mark upon their forehead, and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Thus such as were in the separate state were reunited to their bodies, and lived and reigned like those who were already on the thrones. They "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Thus nothing can be simpler or more beautiful than the way in which this verse sums up the Revelation as a whole. The visions of this prophetic book open, not with the rapture of saints to heaven, but the sight of saints already raptured, often before the seer in the visions, but seen always in a complete condition without addition to their number. Accordingly the rapture of the church with the Old Testament saints must have already taken place, all (as I have no doubt) being caught up at the self-same time to be with the Lord above.

We have seen that these follow the Lord out of heaven, and are next seen enthroned. When the Lord takes His own throne, they take theirs by grace. But, further, we find that the saints who had suffered for Christ, during the time that the others were in heaven, are now reunited to their bodies and live, the Lord waiting for the last martyr that He might not leave out one of those who had died for His name. All the sufferers, either in the early persecutions of Rev. 6, or in the later persecutions (see Rev. 15) up to Babylon's extinction, were now raised from the dead. They lived, and were put therefore into a place and condition suitable for reigning with Christ, no less than the Old Testament saints and the church itself. Such is the meaning of the verse - "The rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."

Let it be carefully observed here that the first resurrection does not mean all rising exactly at the same moment. This is a mistake. We know that the change of all those caught up takes place in the twinkling of an eye. but it does not follow that various bodies are not raised at different times. *For certain* there are two great acts of resurrection, - one when the Old Testament saints and the church are caught up to heaven, the other when Satan was bound after the beast and false prophet were thrown into the lake of fire, as well as Babylon judged. Thus (without speaking of the resurrection of the wicked at the close) there were certainly more acts than one, not to speak of the two witnesses put to death and caused to rise after three days and a half, when the spirit of life entered them, and they not only arose, but went up to heaven, as we know. I speak not of anything that might be deemed exceptional or peculiar, but of two acts of raising saints. From the manner in which resurrection is referred to in scripture, does not God leave room for this? "I will raise him up at the last day." "At the last day" does not mean merely an instant of time. Whether it were the Old Testament saints and the church, or the Apocalyptic saints, if I may so distinguish them, it was in an instant that each were raised, but there was some space between them. What is there to hinder it? There is no expression in the word of God which binds all to rise at the same instant. Those that do rise at the same time rise, no doubt, in a moment; but that there are to be various acts of resurrection is not only not contrary to scripture, but required by its own descriptions. This verse declares it, and there is no other interpretation that can stand even a moment's fair discussion.

This being so, it adds immense clearness in the understanding of the book. And what shall we say of the wonderful wisdom of the Lord? It is called "the first resurrection." This does not intimate we have seen that there is only one act of raising, but that all who share that resurrection, whenever raised, are raised before the millennium begins; so that when the reign of Christ takes place, all such have part in the first resurrection, including Christ Himself, raised at least 1800 years before the church; then the church, with the Old Testament saints; then these Apocalyptic saints at any rate some years after. All this gives us a true and just view of the various parties that have a share in the resurrection. "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

It has been remarked by another, and justly, that the expression "they shall be priests of God and of

Christ" summarily puts out of court the interpretation that supposes a figurative resurrection. For it is clear that, though principles might reign, to be priests is quite inconsistent with a mere figure. It is also clearly a personal reward to those who had suffered.

When the thousand years expire, Satan reappears on the scene to the sorrow and ruin of the Gentiles who were not born of God. But it is for the last time, not of the age only but of the various dispensations of God. "And when the thousand years are completed, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to war." This is clearly of moral importance. The glory of the kingdom does not preserve when men in their natural state are exposed to the adversary. The millennial nations, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea," fall a prey to Satan.

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints, and the beloved city." The beloved city is Jerusalem; the camp of the saints, I presume, is a larger circle and embraces all of Israel and the Gentiles who, being converted, refuse Satan's deceit. It is an evident contrast with the state supposed in the wheat and tare field of Christendom which is found at the end of the age. Wheat and tares grow together till the process of judgment separates. At the end of the millennium the righteous and the wicked form two distinct arrays, though even then there would appear to be a line drawn between the surrounding camp, and the beloved city Jerusalem on earth, where the Jews were. The unrenowned of the nations are now compassing them with their countless hosts, as if to eat them up like grasshoppers. "And fire came down out of heaven from God, and devoured them. And the devil that deceiveth them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where both the beast and the false prophet [are], and they shall be tormented day and night unto the ages of the ages."

Then follows another scene still more solemn - the most awe-inspiring of all we can contemplate, at the same time full of blessing for the Christian to look onward to as that which will for ever put aside every trace of evil, and vindicate good where man must altogether fail. Here accordingly is seen but one throne. It is the divine judgment of man - eternal judgment. Even when God was judging providentially in the beginning of the Apocalyptic visions (Rev. 4), associated thrones were seen. When Christ came personally to judge and govern the quick (Rev. 20: 4), there were thrones; for the risen saints reign with Him. But now there is but one throne: Christ judges the dead. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away." This is of immense moment doctrinally, because it decisively proves that it is altogether unfounded to assume, as is popularly done, that the Lord only returns at this juncture. In the coming of the Lord all include His coming to the habitable earth. Now manifestly, if the Lord does not come before this, there is no world to come to; for the earth and heavens are fled. The common notion, therefore, that the coming of the Lord is at this point is an evident fallacy upon the face of this scripture that describes it, not to speak of others elsewhere. It is not a syllogism that is wanted or that can satisfy here: only require, only believe, the word of God. A single verse dispels clouds of arguments. "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled; and place was not found for them." I admit that afterwards no doubt the new heaven and the new earth are seen; but who contends that this is the sphere to which the Lord comes? To this earth He is coming, and not merely to the new earth in the eternal state. To the same world in which He suffered, according to the scriptures, He will come back. But for the eternal judgment heaven and earth are fled away; and then we see the new and eternal universe. Hence He must have come back previously to both. With this agrees His coming out of heaven in judgment of the earth, described in Rev. 19. He came to the world, and avenged His people on the beast and the false prophet with the kings and their armies; and after that the risen saints reign with Him over it a thousand years. I say not on but over the earth. He with the glorified saints will have their home on high, but none the less shall they reign over this very world for the allotted time.

Then, as we have seen, comes the final test of the nations of the earth after that kingdom has run its

course, and the devil let loose once more deceives flesh and blood after the analogy of all other dispensations. That age of visible glory is inefficacious to change the heart of man, though in the absence of the enemy and the controlling presence of the great King, they render feigned obedience for a long while. It can govern and bless but not convert man. Even the proclamation of the grace of God is powerless save it be brought home by the quickening energy of His own Spirit. In short, no testimony can avail, no work, power, or glory without the word of God applied by the Spirit of God. But in this is shown - what it is of importance to see - the true nature of the kingdom or millennial reign. "That day" does not mean a time when everybody will be converted, but when the Lord Jesus will govern righteously - when overt evil will be judged, and good be sustained perfectly for a thousand years. When any wrong is done, it will be dealt with. As far as the display of government goes, it is according to God morally, and for His glory, though I deny not for a moment that there are elements of evil which are never allowed, but kept under if not expelled. But that the heart of man even so is not renewed becomes manifest, when Satan at the close deceives all that are not converted; and these, as we are told, are countless "as the sand of the sea."

Do not wonder at the vast numbers, or at their defection. The thousand years of peace and plenty will have given occasion for an ever-growing population, spite of a world thinned by divine judgments which open that era. It is to be supposed that it will far exceed anything yet seen on the face of the earth. At the beginning there will have been carnage, as we know, among both the western powers and the eastern powers. In fact, we may say, all nations will be desolated by judgments of one kind or another; but for all this the world proceeding for a thousand years with every outward blessing, and the most admirable government administered by the blessed Lord Himself, will issue in the teeming and prosperous races of mankind. It will be a state of nature unexampled for the fruits of the earth and the enjoyment of all that God has made here below. Consequently there will be an increase in population such as never has been approached since the world was made, yet it afterwards appears, that Satan will not fail to turn the masses of the nations into one vast rebellion against the objects of God's special favour on the earth - the saints - wherever they may be, and the beloved city of Israel, as we have seen.

Then comes not the destruction only of these rebels by divine judgment, but the dissolution of heaven and earth. And Jesus sits on the great white throne. It is the judgment of the dead as such, who now rise and give account of their deeds. All the dead are there who had not part in the first resurrection. The nature of the case exempts of course the saints of the millennium;* and this very simply, because they are never said to die at all. There is no scriptural reason to infer that any saint dies during the thousand years, but rather the contrary. Scripture is positive in Isaiah 65 that death during the millennium only comes as a specific judgment because of open rebellion. When a person dies, it will be a positive curse from God; if he die even a hundred years old, it will be like a baby dying now. Man converted will then not merely reach the natural term - if I may so say - of a thousand years, but pass that bound. If alive before the thousand years, he will live after the thousand years; in fact, literally he will never die, though I do not doubt, on general principles, that the saints of the millennial earth will be changed at the very time when the heavens and earth disappear. Of course they will be preserved through that crisis in some sort of way suitable to divine wisdom. God has not told us how, nor is it our business. He has reserved the matter, though not without enough to guide our thoughts, as we have seen. It is one of those cases which every now and then appear where God checks and reproves our foolish curiosity, as He alone knows how to do perfectly. "Flesh and blood," we know, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." According to the general scope of scripture, then, we may be quite sure that these saints, kept during this universal dissolution of the atmospheric heaven and the earth, will be translated to "the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," in a condition new and meet for the eternal state into which they are ushered. Let others speculate, if they will: I am persuaded that he who essays to conceive the details is merely striving to draw a bow beyond the power of man. For I am not aware that any scripture treats of the subject, beyond laying down principles such as we have sought to apply to the case.

* None, however, can be exempt from being manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, or from giving an account of all done in the body. But no believer comes into judgment. (John 5: 24 compared with Rom. 14 and 2 Cor. 5.)

"And the dead were judged," but not out of the book of life, which has nothing to do with judgment. "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Why then is the book of life mentioned? Not because any of their names were written therein, but in proof that they were not. The book of life will confirm what is gathered from the books. If the books proclaim the evil works of the dead that stand before the throne, the book of life offers no defence on the score of God's grace. Scripture records no name whatever among those judged written there. There was the sad register of undeniable sin on the one side; there was no writing of the name on the other side. Thus, whether the books or the book be examined, all conspire to declare the justice, the solemn but most affecting righteousness, of God's final irrevocable sentence. They were judged every man according to their works. "And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." Thus the only use that seems made of the book is negative and exclusive. Not that any of those judged (and the scene described is solely a resurrection of judgment) are said to be written there: we are shown rather that they were not found in that book.

Again, death and hades are said to come to their end, personified as enemies. "And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Thus was concluded all dealing on the Lord's part with both soul and body, and all that pertains to either. The race was now in the resurrection state either for good or for evil; and thus it must be for ever. Death and hades, which had so long been executioners in a world where sin reigned, and were still doing their occasional office where righteousness is to reign, themselves disappear where all traces of sin are consigned for ever.

Revelation 21

In the first eight verses of Revelation 21 we have the new heaven and the new earth, but besides, awful to say, the lake of fire. Indeed it must be so, because, as we read in the end of the last chapter, there the lost were cast. But still it is a very solemn fact to read, and that which we are bound to preach - that even in the perfect state of eternity, while there is the brightness of the heaven and of the earth into which no evil can enter, you have all the evil that ever has been - all the wicked of every clime and of every age cast into the fixed condition of eternal judgment in the lake of fire.

Observe another very important fact. All the dispensational names of God disappear. It is only God and man now. There is nothing more to hear of nations; nothing more to do with separate countries, kindreds, or tongues. It is the eternal state; and also, in fact, the fullest description of that state which is furnished in the Bible. But a very different point of interest is to be observed.

Although there is such a levelling of human distinctions, and men have to do directly with God - that is men raised from the dead or in their changed condition - we still see the holy Jerusalem - "the holy city, new Jerusalem," separate from the rest of those that fill the new heaven and earth. This is of great importance, because if the new Jerusalem be, as I have no doubt it is, the bride the Lamb's wife, then we have her separate condition asserted in eternity. "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God" (alluding to this very city) "[is] with men." That is, the tabernacle of God is regarded as a separate object, no doubt associated with men, but not confounded with them. Men are not regarded as composing this tabernacle; they co-exist. "The tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor sorrow, nor crying nor shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

All things are thus made new; and, further, "these words are faithful." Nothing more is to be done. "And

he said unto me, It is done. I am the, Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be to him God, and he shall be son to me. But to the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part [is] in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Here occurs a remarkable change in the sequence of the visions, though easily understood; for it must be evident that there is nothing to follow this in point of time. We have just seen that it is the eternal state. Consequently, here we must most unquestionably go back to be shown an important object in the prophecy which could not, without interrupting its course, have been described before. In short, it is as we saw in Rev. 17, after Babylon had been brought before us in the course of the prophecy. We had seen Babylon twice: first, in the circle of God's warnings and testimonies; and then as the object of God's judgment under the seven bowls. Then we have a description of Babylon given. It would have been incongruous to bring in that long description before, because this must have interrupted the flow of the prophetic stream.

Exactly the same thing is repeated here, and what makes it more apparent is the similarity of the introduction on each occasion. "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Who does not see that this is precisely analogous to the verse which opened the description of Babylon? I take it, therefore, that God intended this analogy to be noted by us; that it is not a pursuance of the prophecy, but a description of the holy city previously named, just as the other was a description of the corrupt city, whose judgment had been announced. We had Babylon with a spuriously ecclesiastical but a really murderous character, and at the same time guilty of corruption with the kings of the earth. Here is seen the holy city coming down out of heaven from God, which is declared to be the bride, the Lamb's wife, in the plainest contrast with the great harlot. Yet to this heavenly city, after Christ comes, the kings of the earth bring their offerings and their homage; but there is no excitement of the nations, no filthiness of fornication, no abominations, no blood-guiltiness. In short, Babylon, the disgusting counterpart of the holy city, in earthly ambition seeks the kings and the masses for her own present objects, while the other suffers now and will reign then. The one therefore throws much light upon the other.

But what I particularly call your attention to is the exceeding importance of heeding the retrospect at the bride, or new Jerusalem here, and the consequent removal of the difficulty caused by taking the last vision of this book as part of the prophetic series which begins in Rev. 19. Not so. It is an added digression for the purpose of describing an object already named passingly in the foregoing series, which closes at Rev. 21: 8. As Rev. 17 was a descriptive digression, so is the portion from Rev. 21: 9. The account given of Babylon in Rev. 17 does not follow Rev. 14 or Rev. 16 in point of prophetic time, but differs from them in structure. It gives a retrogressive account of Babylon's character, and shows how it morally compelled the divine judgment. So here a description is given of the bride, the Lamb's wife, and we learn how it is that God will use her for unmeasured goodness and blessing and glory in the millennium, as the devil during this age has used Babylon to accomplish his wicked plans here below. Just as the city of man's confusion was seen in her vile, degraded, and degrading relations with the beast, this city is seen in her pure and glorious relations with the Lamb.

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in [the] spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." It is not into a wilderness the prophet is carried, but he is set on "a mountain great and high," and shown - not the great, but, the holy city Jerusalem. The great city was either guilty Jerusalem or Babylon. This city is seen now as the holy vessel of divine power for governing the earth

during the millennium, "having the glory of God: and her brightness was like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

Then follows a description of the wall, gates, foundations, and general position. "Having a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel." It was important, just because it is the bride, the Lamb's wife, to show that angels are there, and further, that Israel is not forgotten. The very name indeed shows something similar; not of course that the church can ever be earthly. Still God does not forget His ways with His people; and the angels here are only in the quality of porters, if we may so speak; they are at the gates. And as for the twelve tribes of Israel, they are merely written there, nothing more. No hint whatever is given that they constitute the city, but there is the inscription of their names outside. That city will be a constant remembrancer of those who went before restored Israel here below, as undoubtedly it will be used for their blessing during the millennium, but not for theirs only. We shall find, on the contrary, its aspect is toward the universe, yet is there the special place of Israel; and quite right it is that it should be so. "On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." These would appear to be (save Judas Iscariot, of course) the twelve apostles that were peculiarly associated with Christ in His suffering path on the earth. God is sovereign. It is not meant that he who was more honoured in service than any of the twelve, he whom the Lord used for bringing out the church of the heavenly places, will not have his own most singular dignity in this glorious scene. Still God acts in a wisdom far above man, and holds to His principles even there. The twelve apostles of the Lamb will accordingly have their own special place. We can fairly trust God that He will not give a worse place to Paul; yet I do not think that this is his place.

"And he that spoke with me had a golden reed as a measure, that he might measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and its length is as much as the breadth." Thus there is a completeness and perfection about it suited to its present character.

Afterwards we come to the description of itself, - of its wall, its building, its foundations, and its gates. Here it is the city described in itself, on which we need not now enlarge.

Further, a negative point of great importance is presented by the seer, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty is the temple of it, and the Lamb. This, was no lack. On the contrary, it proved the immediateness of communion. The temple would suppose a medium. The absence of a temple is therefore no loss but a gain for this city. It furnishes material for a contrast between the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly city, because if there be one thing more remarkable than another in Ezekiel's description, it is the temple. But here there is none; a temple is for the earth. The heavenly city, which is the full expression of blessedness on high, has no temple because it is all a temple. "The Lord God is the temple of it, and the Lamb as far as we can speak of any. "And the city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, that they should shine for it." This too must not be viewed as if it were a loss. As for the earthly land and city, the moon will have her light increased to that of the sun, and the sun shall be sevenfold. But here there is neither; and this again is an evidence of gain, not of loss. "For the glory of God enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." Creature lights are gone.

After "the nations" in verse 24 omit the words "of them which are saved." You must with the best authorities leave out this addition, if you would have the true force of the verse. It is a wholly unwarranted interpolation. "The nations shall walk in the light of it," Any one of spiritual judgment can see that it should not be "nations of them which are saved." What would be the meaning, if so read? We can understand a remnant saved out of one or more nations; but who ever heard of "nations of them which are saved"? It is altogether unfeasible, and it shows how carelessly we read the Bible that people are not stopped by such an expression. The fact is, in the very best authorities it does not exist at all. The "saved" is a term which, so far from belonging to the nations, is expressly applied to the Jewish remnant

when it is a technical term. But "nations of them which are saved," is a most anomalous expression, and betrays man as the author of it.

"And the nations shall walk in the light of it." It is plain that they are not in this city. "The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it" - not *into* but *unto*. That is, it is simply an expression of the homage that they pay. "And the nations shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for night shall not be there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations unto it. And there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, nor making abomination and a lie: but only those written in the book of life of the Lamb." Moral unfitness has its just censure; but sovereign grace must be asserted also.

Revelation 22

Then we have another glorious description. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." It is not now lightnings and thunders and voices. These were simply the characters of provisional judgment that filled the interval after the church was gone, and before the reign with Christ. But when Christ and the church peacefully reign, such is the imagery that suits - "a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the roadway of it, and of the river, on this side and on that, [the] tree of life," - bearing not merely as the original one did, but now according to the fulness of the provision of God's grace for man, for man in glory first, but for man on the earth also, but for man in glory - "producing twelve fruits, in each month yielding its fruit: and the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations." Man on the earth has his portion in the goodness of a God who is manifesting His kingdom. "And no curse shall be any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." All this description closes in verse 5.

After that we have the admonitions to the end of this book. On these I may say but a very few words.

Verse 6 commends these sayings afresh. And the coming of the Lord is urged in connection with it. "Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." Then again the character of it, as derived from Christianity having already taken its place, is asserted. "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book." In Daniel's time, and even to Daniel himself, the book was sealed. The old oracles were sealed then: not so John's. "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is near." In Daniel's time it was not at hand. To the church the end is always near. In her own course, and in the matters of her portion, the church does not know time at all. Everything that belongs to the body of Christ is unearthly and unworldly. The church is heavenly; and in heaven there are no times nor seasons. There may be lights of the heaven to mark times and seasons for the earth, and again on the earth. But the church consists of souls called out from the earth, and is not of the world: consequently to the church the time is always at hand. When Christ at God's right hand was announced, even from the very beginning, He was ready to judge the quick and the dead. He remains in that condition of readiness from the time when He sat at God's right hand till the present. The church goes on according to the will of the Lord, who might according to His own purpose lengthen or abridge the space. It is entirely in His hand, and in none other's. - Whereas for the Jew, there are necessary dates and momentous changes that must take place; and hence, as Daniel represents the Jew, we have the difference kept up. To the Christian this book is not sealed. All is opened, and this because we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Therefore we find in connection with the book a most solemn warning. "Let him that is unrighteous be unrighteous still: and let the filthy be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." When the hour comes that is spoken of here, it is not for us, but for those who will be found after we are gone. All is then fixed. There will be no time for seeking mercy, as it were: whatever the state in which the Lord at His coming will find us, all is closed up and fixed. Accordingly, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me." We see that it is in connection with

the foregoing - not merely His coming for us who will keep the sayings of it, but for those whom He will find here below - "to give to each as his work is."

Further, after this Jesus introduces Himself, as well as sends His angel. "I Jesus sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright the morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth say, Come: and let him that is athirst come: let him that will take the water of life freely." Thus the name of Christ, not merely as the root and the offspring of David, but as the bright morning star, calls out responsively the heart of the church, and this too under the guiding activity of the Holy Ghost. The church cannot hear of Him as the bright morning star without at once desiring that He should come. She does not, it is true, say, "Come quickly." This would not be fitting for the church nor the Christian. Patience or endurance of hope is what becomes us. But it is blessed that He says, "I come quickly;" and it is only Christ who in scripture ever says so. But we as properly say, "Come." We desire that He should come quickly, but we leave this to Him, because we know His love, and can trust Him. We know that if He tarries, it is not that He is "slack concerning His promise," but that "His long-suffering brings salvation to many." And who would defraud either the soul of salvation, or the Lord of showing it? "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is to Jesus. To whom else could they say it? The bride breathes out this word to the bridegroom; and the Holy Ghost it is that gives strength to her desire that He should come. But there is a message also for others. There is a word to him that hears. "Let him that heareth say, Come." He is urged to take up the same cry. If you are a believer, do not be afraid, even if you know but little; for the Lord neither forgets nor slights those who may be comparatively unintelligent. He has, I think, exactly that class in view when He sanctions the calling him who hears to say "Come." The bride represents those that are spoken of in the normal possession and enjoyment of their privileges. There are many who are not so; but the Lord does not forget them. "Let him that heareth," then, "say, Come." If they have only heard His voice, this after all is the incalculable boon; yea, it is the turning-point of all blessing. It is not the enjoyment of all, but it is the hinge on which all depends. It is the way to all, if it be not the actual entrance into and enjoyment of it. "Let him that heareth," then, be encouraged to "say, Come." There is nothing in Jesus to harm him; there is every thing to bless there is Himself to be enjoyed, even if they have failed in the full knowledge of it here below.

But then while there is such a call to Christ, while the believer is not to be afraid, but to call on the Lord to come, the church does not forget those that are poor sinners, let them be deeply conscious of it, or let them be those that are only made willing by the grace of God (which is the feeblest expression of the sinner's need, just as you have the feeblest expression of the saint in the previous call). So we find the Lord has room for all that is the fruit of His own grace only, - for the appeal of grace, even when there is not the answer to it. Yet grace despised necessarily ends in judgment. "And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Then the book concludes after a solemn warning against either adding to or taking from its contents. "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." "Surely I come quickly." After so long a tarrying how blessed! After so many sorrows, trials, difficulties, dangers, how sweet to have such a word, and to know that He who speaks is the holy and the true, and surely about to come in the faithfulness of His love! He will not fail to take up the gage He has given our hearts. He is coming, and coming soon for us.

May our hearts answer freely to His word of love and truth with our "Amen." His grace be with all!