

GRACE AND GLORY

Study of the Book of Revelation

By A. S. Copley



INTRODUCTION

Sometime after receiving the Holy Spirit in 1906, it occurred to me that the same Holy Spirit who inspired John to write this Revelation of Jesus could also inspire me to understand it. Had I not received the Spirit? Was He not dwelling in me? And had He not called me to be a preacher and teacher of the Word? Indeed, it was the Holy Spirit who was then speaking to my heart. A sweet quiet persuasion possessed me that I did not need other men's cold notes to understand the book. Accordingly, I began to read the book itself alone. But my Teacher and Guide knew that a knowledge of Paul's revelation of Jesus was necessary to an understanding of this book. Hence, not until 1915, when pressed in spirit and urged by some of my assembly, did I begin the definite and detailed study of this wondrous volume. Research proved so profoundly rich, interesting, and profitable that we were constrained to put these findings into print. This we did, bringing much help to many. The first edition was soon, exhausted. We continually receive requests for these notes. Therefore, we are sending forth a fourth edition (1942). It has pleased the Lord to give us the privilege of delivering these lessons at different times to different audiences. Hence, this little volume is the product of prolonged and thorough study. No conclusion has been hastily reached. We have not sought for something "new," but for "The Truth."

Editorial Suggestion: That the reader may understand the book of Revelation better and enjoy it more deeply, we offer several suggestions. First, become very familiar with the book as a whole by repeated readings and rereading. This is how we learned it. Then a study of it with the aid of our notes will prove of great profit to you. If you do not understand them, read them again. If you cannot accept them, please do not hastily cast them into the wastebasket till you have at least given them the attention that our untiring research deserves. Compare our findings with the rest of the Scriptures rather than with other men's writings; then you will be unspeakably edified and refreshed. Filled with unspeakable joy at the great goodness of God, we send forth this modest volume for the glory of Him who shall be recognized soon as "Jehovah, The Almighty."

Editor's Note: We know of no better commentary on the Revelation than this by Brother A.S. Copley. Its informative yet concise style is unique in Biblical notes. You will also note that many of the verses quoted were translated directly from the Greek by Brother Copley. We have made slight revisions in these notes, but by no means changing the meaning of the commentary. We have striven to protect the original writing. 1979.

Come ye, who bow to sovereign grace,
Record Immanuel's love;
Join in a song of grateful praise,
To Him who lives above.

THE INTRODUCTION

"And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of this week he shall cause the sacrifice and the meal offering to cease; and upon a wing of abominations he shall come desolating even unto the consummation; and that which is determined shall be poured out upon the desolator" - Daniel 9:27.

This book of the Revelation is the record of consummations. Its fulfillment will occupy the seven years covered by the above verse quoted from Daniel. That period is called a "week" in prophetic language, or seven years. It is commonly called "the last week of Daniel." That is, there were seventy weeks (490 years) severed off for Israel from Gentile times, which latter began about 606 B.C. when the Jews were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. Sixty-nine of those weeks (483 years), which are considered to be counted from Nehemiah two, reach to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem five days before the Passover. See Matthew twenty-one and John twelve.

Zechariah 9:9 was thus fulfilled in part. Several statements in these chapters show how wonderfully typical that event was of our Lord's return to take the oversight of affairs in view of His Millennial reign and of the reign itself. "The city was moved." The multitude cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David ...Hosanna in the highest." His enemies exclaimed, "Behold, the World is gone after Him." His kingly authority and power were displayed in driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple and in healing the people. The feast prepared for Jesus, prior to his entrance into the city, typifies the wedding in the air - John 12.

The time measurement "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem

(Nehemiah 2) unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks (49 years), and threescore and two weeks" (434 years), or sixty-nine weeks (483 years) altogether. And the last year of that count was exactly the year that Jesus rode in triumph into Jerusalem. Hence, He thus displayed His right to the Princehood which was really due to begin then, if Israel had received Him as the Anointed One (Messiah) and the Prince. "After threescore and two weeks (at the end of the 69th week, or 483rd year) shall Messiah be cut off" - Daniel 9:26. Exactly five days after Jesus' kingly ingress into Jerusalem, He was crucified - John 12:1, 12. Thus His rulership was checked. The last week (seven years) of the determined seventy (490 years) was fulfilled immediately, as recorded in the first seven chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and was completed upon the stoning of Stephen. (See A.S. Copley's notes on Acts - chapters six and seven). Psalm 118:22-24 gives us light here. Note especially verse twenty-four: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Hence, it is called "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10), which we will examine in detail a little later. "The Lord's Day" begins when the Lord Jesus takes His own throne in the air. At that moment, He assumes dictatorship of affairs on earth as far as is necessary in behalf of the Jews. His Princehood begins in Heaven; and, at the same time, He exercises it in a limited sense on earth. Doubtless, this is the "Mighty Angel" standing on land and sea - Revelation 10. See the notes on that chapter. Between verses twenty-six and twenty-seven of Daniel nine, lie hidden this present Church period. Of course, Daniel did not see that, because it was reserved to be revealed to the Apostle Paul - Ephesians 3. Jesus describes this same week in Matthew twenty-four and twenty-five. He marks the middle of that week by saying, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place." Compare Matthew 24:15 with Daniel 9:27. In our study of Revelation, we shall see with astonishing exactness the times and durations of the happenings of this week of seven years. For our information, we have access to only sixty-six volumes, all of which are inspired. As our Instructor, we can depend upon One only, the One who caused these things to be written. Will the reader search these volumes with us, counting wholly and only upon the Holy Spirit?

JOHN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

"A revelation of Jesus Anointed, which God gave to Him to show to His bond-servants what things must take place shortly" - 1:1 Greek. The definite article "the" is not expressed in the Greek, because Brother Paul also had a revelation of Him. He says, "it pleased God ... to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him as glad tidings among the nations" - Galatians 1:15, 16.

That revelation to Paul was inward; this one to John was outward. We need to know Paul's teaching in order to grasp this book properly. Be it understood that this is not a revelation primarily FROM Jesus Anointed; but it is a revelation from God CONCERNING Jesus Anointed. It is a discovery to us of how He is judging the Church now, and of how He shall come from Heaven to judge the world and take the rulership of empires. Jesus Himself is this revelation. Observe the perpetuated dependence of Jesus upon His Father. "God gave unto Him" this revelation. He did not learn it. His weakness continues throughout this age - "I can of Mine own self do nothing" - John 5:30. "For though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God" - II Cor. 13:4. Dear Paul saw this truth and made it his own. Hence, he adds, "We also are weak in Him" (that is, we possess that dependent life, the life of Christ), "but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you." Let us also choose this weakness, this dependent life, for we have it whether we believe it or not. Then we shall enjoy the utmost limit of God's wisdom and power for us and through us for His glory now; and share His coming glory when He will no longer be dependent, but as the glorified anointed Man will reign - "King of kings, and Lord of lords" - even as "God Almighty." "His bondservants" are to know the things which shall come to pass.

Therefore, this "uncovering" is given to Jesus Himself for Him to show to His servants. Who then dare arise and say that this is a mysterious book and not to be understood? Let us take our place as bond slaves of Jesus - read, believe, and heed these things. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" - Proverbs 25:2. Now that it is revealed, let us search out the understanding of the matter for God's glory. "He sent and signified it by His angel." That is, the truths herein in great measure are set forth by signs and symbols. Who was the angel? It was neither Gabriel nor Michael. Bear in mind that the word "angel" simply means "messenger." Sometimes it refers to men, and other times to nonhuman spirits. Here the angel was a redeemed human. In 17:1 he is "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials (bowls)." In 19:10 John "fell at his feet to worship him," supposing him to be Christ. But the angel said to John, "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow bondservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God." You find the same truth taught in 22:6-9. In our further study we will find that nearly all of the good angels mentioned are redeemed human beings, who have become the

messengers of God. "For unto the angels (non-human spirits) hath He not put in subjection the habitable world about to come, whereof we speak" - but unto Jesus Christ - Hebrews 2:5.

JOHN THE BOND SERVANT

The New Testament records three saints named John. First is John the Baptist, a cousin to Jesus and six months older than He as to the flesh. That John prepared the way for Jesus in Israel. He called himself "the friend of the Bridegroom" (Jesus) - John 3:29 The second is John Mark, who was an attendant of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey - Acts 13:5. It is he who wrote the Gospel of Mark. Then third is the Apostle John, one of the twelve, whom Jesus chose to travel with Him. To this one, this revelation of Jesus was signified. This John wrote the Gospel of John and the three Epistles of John. He was one of the hundred and twenty who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and spoke in other tongues. He was well fitted to be entrusted with such a far distant revelation of God's dear Son, on whose bosom he leaned as the beloved disciple. He had learned the Old Testament Scriptures, and through them knew God in a considerable measure. His writings and the treatment he received from a Christ-rejecting world indicate that he walked in the wisdom, joy, and power of the Holy Spirit. Verse two summarizes his Christian career. He "bare record of (testified) the Word of God." That is, he read and expounded the Old Testament, as did every faithful messenger of his day.. For over three years he had heard the preaching and teaching of his Lord, here called "the testimony of Jesus Christ."

To this he witnessed also. Thus, John preached Jesus Christ from the Old Testament and from his personal knowledge and fellowship with Him. He witnessed also to "all things that he saw," referring particularly to the things recorded in this book. Like John, every faithful minister today reads and hears and sees, then faithfully witnesses to it all with an eye single to God's glory.

JOHN'S PRE- BENEDICTION

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and give heed to the things in it written: for the time is at hand" - 1:3. There is always much more in a Scripture citation than appears on the surface. Even so here. The Holy Spirit knew that the enemy would endeavor to hinder the study of this volume. Have you not heard it again and again?

CHAPTER ONE

"This is a sealed book, no one can understand it"? Hence, He encourages us at the very threshold to delve into it. John was blessed in receiving the revelation and in giving it to others. Hence, he announces a special blessing to the pastor and teacher who expound this book to their flocks. There is corresponding profit to the flock who hears and heeds its contents. Why are they blessed? Because "the time is at hand"; that is, the time of its fulfillment. All those saints who thus received this prophecy at any time since John wrote it and received it as "at hand" and saw and took their place by faith as a part of the program will surely share in the honors and rewards awaiting the overcomers. Shall you and I not have our portion of the blessing? The blessing here mentioned means far more than simply an enjoyable understanding of the book. It means to enter into it with the whole heart, receive it as our Lord's last love message to us personally, expect its fulfillment, and purpose by faith to perform our part in the solemn and triumphant program.

Reader, do you really believe that "the time is at hand"? Some people believe with the mouth only. In their works, gifts, and actions they contradict their verbal statements. Let it not be so with us. Remember that, if we read and heed as believing that the time is at hand, though we fall asleep before Christ comes yet we will go to sleep in victory and awake in victory when the first trumpet sounds. Hallelujah!

THE APOSTLE'S SALUTATION

The salutation is peculiar to this book - 1:4. It is the pronouncement of grace and peace from the Triune God. First: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come"; that is, Jehovah, who will forever keep His covenant with His people. Second: "From the seven Spirits which are before His throne." This occurs in no other salutation. This means the sevenfold executive power and wisdom of the Son of God vested in the Holy Spirit throughout the earth. Compare 5:6. The salutation is "from Jesus Anointed," as seen from three angles: (1) "The faithful witness" while on earth - "a minister of the circumcision." (2) "The first begotten of the dead" - what He is as Source, Head, and Pledge of the new creation. (3) "The Prince of the kings of the earth" - what He will prove to be, as the Man of destiny, to the dazzling defeat of all His foes.

Here we behold the three offices of the Anointed One: (1) Prophet, or witness. (2) Priest (implied). (3) King. How fitting and precious John's lofty exclamation of honor: "Unto Him that loved us," as Jehovah. "And washed us from our sins in His own blood," as the Redeemer. "And hath made us kings and priests unto

God and His Father," Are you surprised the he adds - "To Him be glory and the dominion into the ages of the ages"? Nay! We join with John in shouting one eternal "Amen!"

JOHN'S ACCLAIM - THE KEY

"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindred's of the earth shall wail because of Him; Even so, Amen" - 1:7. This is the key verse as to the purpose of the book. It shows that its great theme is the revelation of Jesus Christ from Heaven. Many events precede it, prepare for, and lead up to it; and others will follow and complement it. The "clouds" here mentioned are the saints, resurrected and translated beforehand, who will be revealed with Him. It agrees with Jesus' own words in Matthew 24:30. Doubtless, the "cloud" of Isaiah 60:8 and Hebrews 12:1 speaks of people; also the "clouds" of I Thessalonians 4:17. The "cloud" that received Jesus in His ascension was, doubtless, the out- resurrection of Old Testament saints who came out of their graves and entered into Jerusalem the day that Jesus was raised - cf Matthew 27:52, 53 with Hebrews 11:35. In Jude twelve, false prophets are called "clouds without water." Note in our key verse that more than one cloud is mentioned. How beautifully this forecasts in one word and agrees with 19:5, 7 where we read of three crowds, or clouds, at least: "His servants," "ye that fear Him," and "His Wife." This is one sublime parade made up of three distinct companies. Hence, our key verse announces at the threshold the revelation of "the Christ," or the mystery Christ - Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church. They are called, "the angels of His power," the saints in whom He shall be "glorified" - II Thessalonians 1:7, 10.

Three classes on earth shall see the Lord when He is revealed: (1) "Every eye" - that is, all believers then on earth, for they will be looking for His return. (2) "They also which pierced Him" - that is, the Jewish nation. (3) "All kindred's of the earth shall wail" - that is, all people who will not have believed on Him before. John's heart beat in full sympathy with the Lord. He did not feel bad at the wail of the wicked. He exclaimed, "Even so, Amen!" And, the new man today is in perfect agreement with the just God in all His dealings with men, be they ever so severe. It knows no carnal pity for the flesh. The sudden interruption of the next verse seems to indicate that the Lord Himself powerfully witnessed to John's acclaim, and declared of whom he was writing and what title of authority He should then bear. As if his pen were seized with another hand, he wrote, "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending" (oh, the scope of those words), "saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Observe that what the first Person of the Godhead is called in John's salutation is ascribed to the second Person here, namely, "Jehovah." And, why? Because, when Jesus Anointed will be revealed from Heaven with His glorified saints, then "His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" - Isaiah 9:6. This agrees with 19:13, 15. But not till then. Several other words and phrases harmonize perfectly with our key verse. For example: "Must shortly come to pass," "this prophecy," and "the time is at hand" - 1:1, 3. The word "quickly" (3:11), and the phrases, "till I come," "unto the end," "as a thief" (2:25, 26; 3:3) all carry the same import; also chapter twenty- two. We need to study these citations closely. Be it remembered that this revelation was given nineteen centuries ago. But was it fulfilled then? Did Jesus return then? Nay! We shall see that the substantial fulfillment of this record is yet altogether future. Expositors generally dwell at length upon the seven letters to the seven churches, and find in them a historic fulfillment of seven periods of the history of the Church. Doubtless, they serve that purpose. We need not give them any special attention in that respect for we find in them a deeper and larger purpose. The aforementioned words and phrases demand the latter.

VISION VIEWPOINTS

There are five vision viewpoints. These should be considered closely by the student. The apostle was in his spirit in five different localities and positions in the vision from which he beheld the contents of the book. Their fulfillment is not exactly in the order in which they were given. For example, the period of the first one embraces all the others; and the sixth chapter extends from the beginning to the ending of the seven years. Be it remembered at the outset of our study, that the first three chapters of the book cover this entire Church Age. Chapters four to nineteen cover the seven years of the beginning of the next age. More is written in the Bible about that period than of any other time of similar length.

THE FIRST VISION VIEWPOINT

"I became (or came to be) in spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a voice, loud as of a trumpet" - 1:10. This is by far the most important viewpoint. This is the key verse of the book as to the interpretation of the series of visions, even as verse seven is the key verse relating the purpose thereof. Therefore, let us camp here and get a clear understanding of this viewpoint. Some expositors teach that this verse means that John was in the Holy Spirit on Sunday. Such a view is not at all in keeping with the wording of the text.

The definite article "the" is not given. It does not read, "in the Spirit," but "in spirit." Neither is the article given in 21:10. Is it not an insult to the apostle's official place and his piety, to say that he was in the Holy Spirit on Sunday? He was considered a very devout saint; hence, in history, he is termed "Saint John the Divine." He was in the Holy Spirit every day. He lived and labored in the power of the Spirit, for which reason he was exiled. Perhaps some preachers and teachers do not know by experience what is meant by being in the Spirit. Indeed, we need to be in the Spirit to understand this book, as well as all spiritual truth.

What is meant by the phrase, "The Lord's day"? It means the entire period of the universal dominion of Jesus Christ; that is, His Millennial reign. "The Lord's day" is the antithesis of "man's day" ("man's judgment" - I Cor. 4:3) which Paul terms, "This present evil age" - Galatians 1:4.

God gave world dominion into the hands of men, beginning with the crowning of Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C. Gentile dominion, or "man's day," will end when "the Lord's day" will begin with the crowning of Jesus Christ as "King of kings, and Lord of lords." We shall see that it will embrace "the day of the Lord." David, looking forward through faith's telescope, exclaimed, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" - Psalm 118:24. He rejoiced in hope of the Millennium. John was transported in his spirit into the glorious time toward which all believers are looking. He was in the spirit of that day or period. He was in an attitude of looking forward into the eternal future. Paul experienced a similar transport - II Cor. 12:24. He said, "I knew a man in Christ ... caught up to the third Heaven ... caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words." John was not carried forward in his body, but simply in his own spirit. All the apostles were anticipating the return of Jesus Christ, and that hope was to John of the most absorbing interest. Compare the apostles' query - Acts 1:6. The entire content proves this to be the meaning of verse ten. The book is called, "The words of this prophecy" - 1:3. The announcement, "Behold, He cometh with clouds," was an outburst of his being in spirit on the Lord's day - 1:7. As the Holy Spirit set Ezekiel upon his feet (Ezekiel 2:2), so the same Holy Spirit set John in spirit on the Lord's day. To him, it was as if the scenes described in this book were actually coming to pass before his eyes. That is the meaning of being in spirit on the Lord's day.

Men argue that the phrase "the Lord's day" means Sunday, because the grammatical construction differs from that of the phrase "the day of the Lord." The grammatical construction of the phrase, "the Lord's supper," is exactly the same - I Cor. 11:20. Does anyone doubt that it was the supper of the Lord, the feast in memory of Christ's death for us? That construction is peculiar to the apostle John's writings. We read of "Abraham's seed" in John 8:33, 37, and 39. In that connection, Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day" - John 8:56. Was that not the Lord's day? Will anyone call "My day" Sunday? Surely no one will limit the phrase "My day" to our Lord's ministry on earth. We give due regard to "the first day of the week," even as did the disciples.

That was the first day not only of the week, but of a new era which Jesus Christ introduced by His resurrection. It would have been the first day of the Millennium if Israel had accepted Christ as their Messiah and King. It was the first day of Daniel's last prophetic week (seven years) of blessings - Daniel 9:24. Therefore, the first day of the week was prophetic of the Lord's day. But the New Testament never terms Sunday, or the first day of the week, as "the Lord's day."

JOHN'S ACTUAL EXPERIENCE

The apostle was driven to the island on account of his faithfulness to God's will. Therefore, we repeat that he was in an attitude of "looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior" - Titus 2:13. As a kingdom apostle, he was looking for Jesus to come and reign. Suddenly, he found himself in that very day or time for which he was yearning. I say, that he was looking forward; for he declares, "I heard BEHIND ME a great Voice." Note that, when the Voice had ceased, John "turned to see the Voice"; that is, to see the Person who spoke. This is marvelously significant. He turned from a forward gaze to a backward gaze. "And being turned," he says, "I saw seven golden candlesticks." Let me emphasize it, that this reversed gaze is full of deep meaning. To understand the book, we must stand in spirit where John stood and look back. We must view each event from his viewpoint. We can see the north side of a house from the north viewpoint only. We may understand the happenings of "the Lord's day" from the viewpoints of that day, and from no other. By faith we enter into the vision which was given to the apostle, and study it from his points of view. With the phrase "in spirit," compare 4:2; 17:3; 21:10. John remarks, "Immediately I was (became) in spirit." "He carried me away in spirit"- 4:2; 17:3; 21:10. People generally consider Christendom from the standpoint of being in the midst of it; but, like John, we must study it from the standpoint of the Lord's day. John, looking back, beheld the Son of Man walking in the midst of the churches with flaming eyes and fiery feet judging as an Examiner every member as to his conduct. The

closing days were especially emphasized to him. That judgment must precede and prepare for "the Lord's day." In the capacity of Judge, our dear Lord Jesus searches believers and separates them from the power and love of the world and from the religiousness of the age. He also separates believers from believers. The seven letters of chapters two and three prove this to be true. Peter teaches the same thing, saying, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" - I Peter 4:17. The happenings of the first three chapters of Revelation are seen from the first viewpoint. A nine fold description of Christ as the Judge is found in 1:13-15. The judgment of the Church is given in chapters two and three.

"THE LORD'S DAY"

That period will begin with Christ taking His own throne in Heaven. "Salvation ... and the Kingdom of our God" (12:10) must obtain in Heaven before they can obtain on the earth. John saw that "a throne was set (being set) in Heaven, and One sat on the throne" - 4:2. The Lord Jesus is that One. "The Lord's day" must begin in Heaven before "the Day of the Lord" can begin on earth, because His operations on earth will proceed from Heaven. The commencement of "the Lord's day" is indicated in I Thessalonians 4:16, 17. "The Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with an archangel's voice and with a trump of God, shall descend from Heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, the living ones who remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Then He will return to Heaven with the saints and occupy His own throne. "The Lord's Day" in its full duration will embrace the entire Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. That period is also termed "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" - I Cor. 1:8; II Cor. 1:14. The first seven years of that period called "the tribulation" will be an intrusion, because the nations will insist on continuing their dominions. Their refusal to accept Christ as the universal Ruler will stamp them as usurpers; hence, He will be compelled to fight for His right to reign. That refusal and the refusal of the Jews to accept Christ as their Messiah will occasion the tribulation days of seven years. The last part of those years is called "the Day of the Lord," a frequent phrase in the Old Testament. See II Thessalonians 2:2.

That was a brief period of retributive judgment upon the wicked. It is termed, "The day of His wrath" - 6:17; 11:18; 14:10; 15:1, 7; 16:1; 19:15. Joel says, "Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come ... A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness ... The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" - Joel 1:15; 2:2, 11. "...That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation..." - Zephaniah 1:14-18. Read these utterances and ponder. "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" - Matthew 24:22. In that short time: The great whore, or false church, will be judged. The battle of Armageddon will be fought. Satan will be cast into hell. And the two beasts will be cast into the lake of fire. All world dominion will be brought completely under the control of Jesus Christ, as Almighty God. Precisely put, "the Lord's day" falls into three sections: The tribulation time (seven years) occupies the first two sections. From the battle of Armageddon to the end of the Millennium is the third.

THE SECOND VISION VIEWPOINT

"And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in Heaven, and One sat on the throne" - 4:2. Here John is caught up to Heaven in his spirit and beholds the throne of Christ as it will be set up, the full overcomers being with Him. He observes also the announcements and executions of judgments on the earth. This point includes, in the main, chapters four to nine, twelve, and fourteen to sixteen. He sees three distinct ranks of believers. First; The living ones and twenty-four elders. Second: The countless company of chapter seven. Third: The 144,000 of chapters seven and fourteen.

THE THIRD VISION VIEWPOINT

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea" - 13:1. The apostle "stood upon the sand of the sea," in his spirit. The sand figures the shifting unsettled conditions of the nations. He beheld also the formation and career of the seven-horned world empire.

THE FOURTH VISION VIEWPOINT

This is told in 17:3. John was carried "away in the spirit into the wilderness," which represents the world. From thence he beheld the judgment of the harlot, the overthrow of religious Babylon, related in chapters seventeen and eighteen.

THE FIFTH VISION VIEWPOINT

This is recorded in 21:10. "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God." This scene connects us with eternal things. These last two viewpoints strongly confirm our interpretation of 1:10 - "I became in spirit on the Lord's day." The article "the" is not in the Greek in any of the four quotations. It does not say "in THE

Spirit," but simply "in spirit" exactly as our common version gives in 17:3; 1:10 and 4:2 are precisely the same - "I became in spirit." Note that in the first, second, and third scenes, the apostle stood at or near the commencement of the seven years. In the last, he stood about a thousand years later. Only in the first, did he have the backward gaze - 1:12. The word "behold," as an exclamation, occurs twenty-five times in the book.

THE INSPIRED OUTLINE

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be after these things" - 1:19. First: "The things" John had seen were in 1:12-18. Study the nine fold description of the Lord Jesus, the Judge of the Church. Second: "The things which are" refer to this Church Age. Verse twenty explains that "the seven stars" are the seven angels; that is, messengers. Seventy-two times the word "angel" or "angels" occurs in the book. Evidently, only five of them are disembodied spirits. All the others are human messengers. Observe that the "twelve angels" figure "the twelve tribes" - 21:12. See verse seventeen also. Compare Matthew 24:31 and II Thessalonians 1:7 where angels mean saved human beings. "The seven candlesticks ... are the seven churches." All Christendom throughout this age is pictured by the seven churches amid their angels: that is, their pastors or leaders. The goodness and badness of Christendom is described in chapters two and three. Third: "The things which shall be after these things" are told out in the remaining nineteen chapters of the book. They record the happenings of the age or dispensation that follows the Church dispensation. Note that the first verse of chapter four declares. "I will show thee things which must be after these things"; that is, after the things outlined in chapters two and three. Therefore, the book of Revelation is not history from chapter four on, but prophecy. The events of chapters four to twenty-two are yet to be fulfilled.

THE JUDGE DESCRIBED

Revelation 1:12-18

"Write the things which thou sawest ... the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks (lampstands)" - 1:19, 20. What the apostle saw is called a "mystery," because the truth of God as it relates to Christendom is a secret hidden in these symbols. This agrees with Jesus' words to the disciples in Matthew thirteen. This present Church period is "the Kingdom of the heavens" in mystery. He said, "Because it is given unto you (His disciples) to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given. Therefore speak I to them (the multitudes) in parables" - Matthew 13:11, 13. The seven parables of that chapter are the Master's pen picture of this religious age. They have a remarkable correspondence with the letters to the seven churches, which we will study under division two.

The Holy Spirit alone can enable us to grasp the meaning of these parables and of these symbols. How necessary then to be filled with the Spirit. John relates - "I turned to see the Voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks (lampstands) one like unto the Son of Man" - 1: 12, 13. The Voice which John heard behind him was great like a trumpet. It was so august that he dared not move till He ceased speaking. The nine fold description that followed was so sublime that he could scarcely believe his own eyes, which informed him on looking backward that before him stood the Man with whom he had had fellowship for over three years. Hence, he adds, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Let us look at this majestic Personage.

"CLOTHED WITH A GARMENT DOWN TO THE FOOT." Every item of the ensuing description stamps it as official. Jesus is now, during this age, in Heaven fulfilling His ministry as High Priest mediating for His people before God. But here the apostle sees Him on earth, walking around "in the midst of the seven candlesticks (lampstands)" - the churches. Evidently the Lord's clothing speaks of His official robe as High Priest. The word for "clothed" (having been clothed) is the same as "endued" in Luke 24:49. He was endued with power, invested with authority from on high, when the Holy Spirit came upon Him by the Jordan. That investiture was for His past prophetic office, for His present priestly office, and for His future kingly office. As Jesus is interceding in Heaven in our behalf, so here He is seen with priestly authority mediating for God amidst the saints on earth. His ministry here is searching, probing, and examining in view of instruction, correction, and rebuke as qualifying the saints to reign with Him during the coming age.

"GIRT ABOUT THE PAPS WITH A GOLDEN GIRDLE." Babies in Christ need "the pure milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby." But we cannot expect to be babies always. There comes a weaning time. Mothers girt up their breasts. Likewise, a judge restrains his affectional nature. He notes closely all the evidence for and against the one being examined, and gives sentence accordingly. In 15:6 we behold certain saints, with "their breasts girded with golden girdles," ready to pour out the seven last plagues upon

the earth. They assist the Lord Jesus in judging the world. No doubt, the spiritual saints are the agencies through whom He now judges the whole of Christendom. "Do not ye judge them that are within?" – I Corinthians 5:12.

"HIS HEAD AND HIS HAIRS WERE WHITE LIKE WOOL, AS WHITE AS SNOW." Daniel 7:9 records about the same things of "the Ancient of days" which suggests the majesty, purity, holiness, sublimity, and eternity of Him who walks throughout the Church. He is seen here as "God ... manifest in the flesh" - in the capacity of Judge as truly as in the capacity of Savior - I Timothy 3:16.

"AND HIS EYES WERE AS A FLAME OF FIRE." Every member of Jesus' body here speaks of Him as a Judge. Nothing escapes the scathing scrutiny of His holy justice. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins" - Jeremiah 17:10. Nor does He look upon appearances, but upon the heart. The Word is the instrument of this examination. "For living is the Word of God and efficient, and sharper than every twoedged sword and penetrating unto the dividing of both soul and spirit, both of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The lampstand Examiner is doing these very things by means of the preaching and teaching of the full Gospel of God's grace and the Gospel of glory. No saint escapes this judgment - "There is not a created thing not manifest before Him; but all things are naked and laid bare (taken by the throat and exposed) to the eyes of Him with whom is our reckoning" - Hebrews 4:12, 13. Thank God, we shall all be justly rewarded according to the deeds done in the body.

"AND HIS FEET LIKE UNTO FINE BRASS, AS IF THEY BURNED IN A FURNACE." Every new item describing the Judge seems to intensify the judgment. Brass always symbolizes judgment.

The brazen altar, consuming the slain lamb, pointed to Calvary where our sins were judged. "Fine brass" witnesses of intricate judgment. Burning brass flames out scathing unsparing judgment. This whole clause declares that the Son of God is moving by the Spirit through the Word throughout the Church, judging everywhere in the minutest manner. God be praised! The same Word that consumes the dross, also builds up that which remains. The Word that condemns the wrong also confirms the right, which is comforting.

"AND HIS VOICE AS THE SOUND OF MANY WATERS." Daniel says, "Like the voice of a multitude" - Daniel 10:6. Both of these utterances have a correspondence with 19:6 where the saints' voice is as "the voice (sound) of many waters." As stated above full-fledged believers, being in fullest sympathy with Jesus Christ, are the present executors of the Divine judgment of the Church. This accounts for the voice sounding so loud to John. Compare Ezekiel 1:4, 24.

AND HE HAD IN HIS RIGHT HAND SEVEN STARS. Verse twenty informs us that the stars are the angels or messengers or pastors of the churches. As the seven churches represent the entire Church during this age, so the stars represent all the Gospel ministers of the age. The word "star" suggests that this age is night, in the sense that Christ "the Sun of righteousness" is absent - Malachi 4:2. Paul terms it - "This present evil age" - Galatians 1:4. It is "evil" because its characteristic feature is religious legalism. It is also man's day. What an honor, and yet what a responsibility, rests upon the servants of God. They are the leading luminaries of men today. How sad that many of them are dark lanterns and give false light. As the harbinger of the Millennial day, Jesus announces Himself to be "the bright and morning Star" - 22:16; II Peter 1:19. Then He will arise as "the Sun of righteousness ... with healing in His wings" - Malachi 4:2. Meanwhile, during this present time, the Lord holds and guides His true messengers and rebukes and chastens the others. Each will be rewarded according to his works.

"AND OUT OF HIS MOUTH WENT A SHARP TWOEDGED SWORD." This Sword is none other than the Word of God, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" - Hebrews 4:12.

That Word is judging us now - reproof, correcting, and instructing us. If we yield to its faithfulness today, we will escape its condemnation and not be ashamed at His coming. There is no getting by the fact that our continual attitude toward God's written Word will determine our present victory and joy and our eternal sphere and reward.

"AND HIS COUNTENANCE WAS AS THE SUN SHINETH IN HIS STRENGTH." In 10:1 we read that "His face was as it were the sun." Saul saw a light from Heaven above the brightness of the sun, which was the effulgence of this same glorified Man. Should we wonder at John saying, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead"? Ah, he was gazing upon a sun-clad, majestic, hoary-headed Personage who had flaming eyes, brazen feet, and a thundering voice - walking, searching, roaring, revoking with authority in the midst of the lampstands. You say, "It was only a vision." But the facts versioned have proved to be far more real and majestic than the vision. Truly, Jesus Christ is solemnly searching, weighing, and separating His people. "Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle," saith the Lord - Ezekiel 34:17, 20, 22. Else how shall "the Lord, the righteous Judge" make it manifest as to who is building wood and hay and stubble, or gold and silver

and precious stones '? Who shall be found ready when the trumpet sounds? Be it understood that this judgment of the assembly of God is absolutely necessary before the judgment of the world can begin. There must be a company of first rank full-fledged overcomers in Heaven with glorified bodies to assist the Lord Jesus in judging the world. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? ... Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" - I Corinthians 6:2, 3.

MY NEIGHBOR'S BIBLE

I am my neighbor's Bible,
He reads me when we meet;
Today he reads me in my home,
Tomorrow in the street.
He may be relative or friend,
Or slight acquaintance be;
He may not even know my name,
Yet he is reading me.

CONSOLATION OF THE JUDGE

"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: and the Living One, but I became dead; and, behold, I am alive into the ages of the ages, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death" - 1: 17, 18.

The sight of such holy majesty and authority was too much for mankind, because of "sin in the flesh," and will be until we get our glorified bodies. Daniel had similar experiences. Once he said, "I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days ... I was astonished at the vision." Later he declares, "My comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength ... I became dumb ... neither is there breath left in me" - Daniel 8:27; 10:8, 15, 17. But God sent comfort to him through Michael. How rich are these words of comfort to John. One thing the Lord did, and six facts He stated of Himself. He is "the First" - not in point of time only, but especially in point of excellence.

That is, He is "the Chief." He is also "the Last." The Greek word "eschatos" means "the farthest, the uttermost, the most extreme, the remotest, the limit in every direction - the innermost, the lowermost, the uppermost, the last." Jesus Christ is not the First Adam only, for He was before Adam; but He is the Chief Adam, the first Adam having been a "figure" only - Romans 5:14. He is the Chief Adam from every viewpoint. He is also the Last Adam from every viewpoint. He knows the deepest fellowship with the Father and with the saints - the Innermost. He earned the highest glory - the Uttermost. He is the circumference of all - the Outermost. What unspeakable comfort that He who stands in the midst - so majestic, holy, and terrible - is He who became dead for our sins, and is alive to all eternity. Finally, He has unlimited authority and power over the grave and the lower regions. In due time, He will deliver His elect from the former; and will purify the latter from demons and the wicked dead, and cast them into the lake of fire. The Lord showed His authority and power over the grave and the lower regions when He was raised from the dead.

"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" - Matthew 27:52, 53. It is also written - "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive" - Ephesians 4:8. See also Romans 10:7; I Peter 3:19. Doubtless, when Jesus arose and ascended He robbed "Abraham's bosom," the receptacle of redeemed spirits from the beginning until Christ came, of all those spirits therein imprisoned and took them to Heaven with Him. The "prisoners of hope" were then released - Zechariah 9:12. Therefore, those who die as believers since Jesus ascended to Heaven, go immediately to Heaven. This is Paul's meaning in expressing "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" - Philippians 1:23. In II Corinthians 5:8 the same apostle states a similar fact - "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." To be with Christ now in Heaven without a body is far better; hence, it is far more desirable than to be here in this fragile body and absent from the Lord.

THE JUDGE OFFICIATING

Revelation Chapters Two and Three

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ... I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My

judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" - John 5:22, 23, 30. While Jesus was on earth, He judged or discerned as to who believed and to what extent they received His teaching. He does the same today. The seven letters to the seven churches are a perfect photograph of all Christendom, snatched by the precise moving camera of our Lord's high priestly scrutiny - He "walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" as Judge. The description of Him in chapter one and the constant language of these letters prove this very interesting fact.

MANNER OF ADDRESS

TO WHOM ADDRESSED: "Unto the angel of the church." Every letter begins the same way - addressed to the angel. By the angel is meant the pastor or shepherd of that particular assembly. The word "angel" simply means "messenger." As Christ is the Head of the entire Church so each pastor, as representing Christ, is head of his assembly. Therefore, there is a grave responsibility upon pastors to "preach the Word" and be "ensamples to the flock." God expects this: For He appoints them, then keeps and guides them, and enables them to perform His will. Jesus "holdeth the seven stars in His right hand" of authority. They can trust and obey Him, then roll the responsibility back on Him. Pastors should not be "careless" nor "careful" (filled with unbelieving anxiety), but "carefree." The assembly also is responsible to receive the God-sent message and the loving care of the shepherd, and stand with him in faith and prayer and service. A true pastor does not lord it over God's heritage, nor does the assembly resent the Truth.

THE EXACT NAME ADDRESSED: This is not the name of the assembly, but of the town in which the assembly gathered; for example, "the church of Ephesus." Five of the letters have this style. Smyrna and Laodicea read thus, "The assembly of the Smyrnians" and "the assembly of the Laodiceans." In the latter style of address, the real spiritual condition of each church is more decidedly expressed than in the former. The suffering bruised life of the one and the light indifferent religious disposition of the other are set forth in Smyrna and Laodicea. These two also express the extreme opposite conditions in Christendom.

BY WHOM ADDRESSED: "These things saith He." We saw in chapter one, that God gave this revelation concerning the Son to the Son. Now the Son informs John what to write to the sons. In each letter, certain items of His description as Judge are necessitated by the character of that particular assembly. For example, in the first letter it is - "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (lampstands)." In Paul's epistle to this same Ephesian church, we read of the seven ones - "One body ... one Spirit ... one hope ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" - Ephesians 4:4-6. God made provision for the whole Church to be one throughout this age. The assembly in Ephesus was typical of this provision; and she was professedly what her name indicates - a heavenly people. For "Ephesus" means "Full-Purposed." It was the city of Diana, Roman goddess of the moon. All the messengers are one in God's purpose - "Laborers together with God" - I Corinthians 3:9. All of God's people are one. Hence, at the doorway of this letter, the Lord is seen holding all the ministers of this age in His hand and walking in the midst of all Christendom during this age. In the second letter, His address is comforting; but, in the third, it is threatening.

THROUGH WHOM ADDRESSED: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This is exactly the exhortation that closes each letter; except, in the first three, a promise to the overcomer follows. The Holy Spirit is the present proficient Agent of examination, employing the Word as the sufficient instrument. John and all who give forth the Truth in the power of the Spirit are the efficient messengers of God to the Church today. All true ministers judge the flesh in themselves first then in others, and count with God. These are solemn searching facts. Mark it well, every letter is to all the churches - comfort for the faithful, correction for the erring, and warning for the incorrigible. The phrase "the churches" does not contradict the oneness of Christ's people, mentioned above; for the whole Church and all of them together constitute of the one Body (Church)." The phrase "the churches" does not mean the various denominations of today, but those individual congregations located in different cities; for denominationalism and sectarianism are unscriptural. These break the unity and oneness of the Church. Nowhere do we read in the Word that certain assemblies together constitute "a church" or "a denomination." No provision was ever made for "isms" or "schisms" in the Body - I Corinthians 1:10; 12:25. But, dispensationally, those assemblies typify denominational conditions of today. This we will see clearly later. How fitting, therefore, the exhortation - "He that hath an ear, let him hear." Great stress is placed upon the ear in this book. The earring was the chief jewel given to Rebekah - Genesis 24:22. In 1:3 special blessing is assured to them that hear and heed this prophecy. Less and less will men have ears to hear as the end of the age approaches. If the Holy Spirit can really get both our ears, oh, what He will show us of God's grace.

FIRST WORDS OF ADDRESS: "I know thy works." This is the searching salutation to every assembly. The

Judge does not speak at random. He is fully informed of the good, better, and best and of the bad, worse, and worst - from the highest loyalty of the most abandoned saint to the deepest "depths of Satan" in the most wicked professor. Oh, how secure are all believers before such a Magistrate, both as to their destiny and reward. He judges "righteous judgment" - John 7:24. We are safe and happy when we are on good terms with the Judge. Nor can He be bribed. This Discerner finds everybody at home. Most people are occupied with works, instead of Jesus. They are looking for and hoping to see great works. Then they want to be judged by their works and commended for them. Verily, they shall have their reward. The dear Lord Jesus sees into the character of men's labors, and discovers also the prime and progressing motives thereof. Oh, the disappointment that awaits the mass of religious workers, high and low. Oh, let us be sure to build gold and silver and precious stones only - I Corinthians 3:12.

COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

We will become familiar with these seven letters by reading them through many times and by studying them from different angles. They are truly much in little and many-sided. They contain far more Truth than has been conceded generally.

First: Note some fascinating comparisons. The Judge finds cause in five of the churches for reproof and correction. But they never profited by the reproof. They "repented not." The effects of the early Church leaving her first love as recorded in the first letter are seen in four of the others in departing from the Truth and in allowing and imbibing error and finally ending in formality and lukewarmness. All the churches are approached in the same language - "I know thy works." The last exhortation is the same to all - "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Thus, great prominence is given to a listening ear. If we put our ears up to God's will and let Him bore them through with the awl of Truth, we will learn the deep secrets of the Lord - Deut. 15:12-17; Exodus 21:5, 6. At the very threshold, blessings are promised to those who read and heed the words of this book - 1:3.

The second and sixth churches named, Smyrna and Philadelphia, have some encouraging things in common. They are not at all blamed; but they are especially comforted. They have the same foe to withstand - "Them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" - 2:9; 3:9. In them both, we read of crowns. These two are, doubtless, on the same plane in their loyalty to Christ.

Second: Note some interesting contrasts. In the first letter is found the most striking and important one. Over against the labor and patience and intolerance and discipline of false apostles, and forbearance and endurance and hatred of Nicolaitanism - and all this for Christ's sake - over against all this is placed the fearful charge: "Thou hast left thy first love." That was the root-cause of all the succeeding failures and faults in all Christendom.

We will examine this closely in our study of the letter to Ephesus. The promises and rewards are different, depending upon the heart attitude of the individual to God's will. Special rewards are vouchsafed to Smyrna and Philadelphia. The evil influences of false teachers and wrong doctrine are pointed out particularly in the third and fourth letters. Oh, how we need to cleave to and emphasize "the doctrine of the Lord" which is a unit. Ephesus hates the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. But, in Pergamos, Nicolaitanism is taught as a doctrine by some; and another teaching is introduced. In Thyatira, false doctrine is taught by the church herself. Finally, Laodicea is self-satisfied, pleasure-seeking, blind, naked, deceived, contented; and, at last, spued out of God's mouth.

RELATION OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

The Lord sovereignly made this revelation of His Son known to these particular seven assemblies, which He chose for this purpose; and they represent all Christendom during this Church Age. They have a dispensational relationship. Each one stands for a certain period of church history:

EPHESUS introduces the age, and covers about the first three hundred years. SMYRNA figures all full overcomers who die during this age. PERGAMOS reaches down to about the sixteenth century, where THYATIRA and SARDIS begin. PHILADELPHIA and LAODICEA stand for diverging features of the present time.

In harmony herewith, these assemblies are related to one another as to their religious characters and worth. When Ephesus as a body refuses to repent, the candlestick which figures the really spiritual saints is removed and becomes the assembly of the Smyrnians. What remains of the Ephesian assembly constitutes the assembly in Pergamos, in the same sense. Degeneration increases; for evil doctrine allowed is sure to prevail. Again, the congregation fails to repent at the Judge's command. Hence, the more spiritual ones, the overcomers in this grade, are separated by the Divine hand; and they are known as "the church in Sardis," which means "escaping" or "prince of joy." What remains of Pergamos constitutes "the church in Thyatira,"

representatively. The latter answers to Catholicism. Sardis answers to Protestantism. Philadelphia stands blameless above and in spite of the worldly Pergamos condition and the lordly Thyatira condition and the empty Laodiceans condition. Smyrna and Philadelphia are on the same plane and stand forth as full overcomers - Smyrna representing all believers during this age who fall asleep in Jesus in full victory, and they will share in the out-resurrection; and Philadelphia those who will live till Jesus sounds the trumpet and they will be the first to be translated. Thus, there are three grades or ranks of believers outlined in these seven letters to the churches.

TOMORROW

I have nothing to do with tomorrow,
My Saviour will make that His care.
Should He fill it with trouble and sorrow
He'll help me to suffer and bear.
I have nothing to do with tomorrow –
Its burdens then why should I share?
Its grace and its faith I can't borrow,
Then why should I borrow its care?

STUDY OF THE LETTERS THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Ephesus represents the saints who are seated in the heavenlies in Christ; hence, all her members should have been the highest type of believers. Be it remembered that our beloved Brother Paul established this assembly. He visited it several times. He spent over three years there, teaching them and building them up in the faith. It was there that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul," delivering the sick and demon possessed by means of handkerchiefs and aprons which had touched his flesh. There "mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed," which is typical of the final triumph of Paul's message in these closing days. It was to the elders of the Ephesian assembly that Paul said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" - Acts 18 and 20.

It is also a solemn fact that, to the Ephesian assembly, the same apostle wrote the deepest doctrinal and practical truths regarding believers of this age. A thorough knowledge of that letter will aid greatly in understanding this book of Revelation. Observe their spiritual status when he wrote. He says, "I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints" - Ephesians 1:15. Faith in Jesus produces love for the saints. Faith in all the counsel of God, which those saints had received, must awaken in them a love for other saints to learn the same wondrous truths. For this praiseworthy congregation, Paul offers two very essential prayers. The first one is threefold - Ephesians 1:15-23. The second one is sevenfold - Ephesians 3:16-19. It will pay the reader to study these petitions.

"These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (lampstands)" - 2:1.

The whole Church was meant to be Ephesian in experience. She should have grown up into Christ "in all things." The provision for it was complete and adequate. The word "holdeth" ("kraton," Greek) means "hath power, dominion, control." All of Christ's ministers are in his right hand of authority; and there is no lack to any of them who yield to His control. Furthermore, He is present continually, walking around in the midst, noting all that is praiseworthy or blameworthy and every sorrow and joy. Alas! Many do not grow, but remain infants in grace and remain fleshly till death. Many have imbibed error in belief and practice. These are indicated in John's four epistles of reproof.

John names nine items of commendation in favor of the church in Ephesus. These nine can be grouped into three - patient labor, patient endurance, and intolerance of evil. How sad that the Lord had to record a "nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love"; that is, "thy preeminent love." Remember that it was for her faith and love that Paul commended this assembly. John says nothing of their faith; but he deplores their loss of love.

Doubtless, the phrase "first love" here means much more than simply the love they had for Jesus when they were first saved. The original meaning is not first in point of time only, but chiefly in point of value or importance. It means "preeminent." In I Timothy 1:15, 16 it is translated "chief" and "first." Saul was the

"preeminent" sinner; hence, God showed forth His "preeminent" (first) mercy in saving him.

Now, when we see that God's chief or preeminent purpose in redemption was to build a Bride for His dear Son, we get the clue to the signification of "first love." As a congregation, they had laid hold of this glorious truth, and were running to be partakers of the Bridehood of Christ. Not only did they love Jesus as Savior and His appearing as King, but they love Him as the coming Bridegroom. This latter was the "preeminent love" from which they fell. Mark it well. But for verses four and five, where could we find a more model church? Nevertheless, no matter what other superexcellent qualities an assembly may have, if they have left the preeminent love for their Lord - if to be in the Bridehood of Christ is not their absorbing aim and burning desire - He is deeply grieved. They miss God's best, and they never reach the highest place.

A FULL-GROWN MAN

In answering Paul's two petitions, recorded in Ephesians one and three, God causes those saints to grow "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"; to "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ." Therefore, "no longer may they be infants, being tossed and driven about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men in craftiness with the view of the systematizing of the error" - Ephesians 4:13-15. Finally, out of this fully developed man, the whole Body of Christ or the Church, God builds "the assembly glorious" which corresponds grandly with the rib taken out of Adam's side of which Eve was builded and became his wife a "help meet for him" - Genesis 2:18. All full-grown saints accept the truth of our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, and our seat with Him in the heavenlies. He only is their life; and, of course, the Christ-life takes form in them and grows up to full maturity in them. Thus, they become full overcomers. Hallelujah! All believers are in Christ, but not all believers have Christ in them in this practical sense. Else why the prayer - "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"? - Ephesians 3:17.

EXHORTATION AND THREAT

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the Preeminent works" - 2:5. What is meant by "first" or "preeminent" works? Preeminent love produces Preeminent works, even "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" - Eph. 2:10. We are informed in I Thessalonians 1:3 of a "work of faith and labor of love" which are particular traits of Ephesian saints. No one can leave his "first love" without also falling from such high-grade works.

The lampstand symbolizes light - "Ye are the light of the world" - Matthew 5:14. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" - Ephesians 5:8. Hence, pastors are called "stars" which give light during this night of the absence of Christ - who is "the Sun of righteousness," "the Light of the world" - Malachi 4:2; John 8:12. The removal of Ephesus' lampstand shows that not all of her members left their "first love" and first works." The faithful ones indeed were the lampstands or light bearers. They were removed from the congregation because she repented not.

Dispensationally, Smyrna answers to those full overcomers of Ephesus; that is, the lampstand was removed to Smyrna, figuratively speaking. The church of Smyrna was "faithful unto death."

The church in Philadelphia, also in the same order as Smyrna, will be faithful unto translation. All down this Church Age, God has been removing individual overcomers from failing assemblies.

Their love waxed hotter, seeing God's goodness more and more. They became Smyrna people, called so because of their bitterness of soul at the decline of their brethren; and the bitterness was aggravated by persecutions from the brethren.

THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

"Smyrna" signifies "myrrh," which was the first ingredient of the "holy anointing oil" in the tabernacle service - Exodus 30:23-25. It was one of three gifts brought to the Baby Jesus by the wise men. Myrrh was an exquisite perfume and a sacred disinfectant - Song of Solomon 3:6; John 19:39. It figures the contriteness and brokenness of spirit which flows from a life that is tried and bruised. Smyrna saints are full overcomers. They "are unto God a sweet savour of Christ (on account of Christ)" - II Corinthians 2:15. Through the Holy Spirit, they disinfect and purify the whole Church.

Be it remembered that the Judge finds no fault with the Smyrnians, nor with the Philadelphians. These two churches are on the same plane, as shown by the points of similarity and contrast.

Study the significant facts about Him who speaks the words herein written - 2:8.

How comforting is verse nine. He knows our sufferings. But note the four words in parenthesis - "but thou art rich." The tribulation and poverty are very apparent. Her true riches - rich in love and faith and alms deeds - are hidden. They are indeed in a parenthesis. The life of Smyrna believers is concealed. So also are their conflicts and victories, their training and growth, their sorrows and joys - "unknown" to men, "and yet well known" to God - II Cor. 6:9.

The "tribulation and poverty" are further expressed by the phrase "tribulation ten days," which means that saints in this class experience the fullest measure of trial. With Paul, they suffer "the loss of all things" to win Christ. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" - II Timothy 2:12. The depth of our tribulation here, determines the height of our coming glory. If our tribulation and poverty now number "ten" - that is, to the uttermost - our glory will be higher most and uttermost. Present comfort - "Fear none of those things." Future prospect - "a crown of life," and no "hurt of the second death."

Smyrna stands for all full overcomers through this age who fall asleep in Jesus. They will be resurrected when the Philadelphia saints are translated, and together ascend to Heaven with glorified bodies as the first rank. We shall see them in chapters four and five, sitting on thrones, wearing "crowns of gold" - "in the midst" of the supreme throne, "and round about the throne," "full of eyes before and behind" - the eternal "cherubim of glory." They triumphantly exclaim day and night: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" - 4:8.

THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS

The word "Pergamos" means "much married" - from "gamos" wedding or marriage, and "per" through. This church became ensnared by the sumptuous learned city in which it was located, and became worldly. Figuratively, the Pergamites were those of Ephesus who did not go on in full victory like the Smyrnians. Dispensationally, it dates from about 325 A.D., when Constantine began to befriend the Christians. Bitter persecution ceased. Church and state became wedded.

What was already intruding its nose like a camel into Ephesus, now made its way through the door. False doctrine, that could not be tolerated at first, became part of the creed later. All of this was because Ephesus left her "preeminent love." Beware! Is it any wonder that the Judge addresses Himself to this congregation as "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges"? He endeavors to separate her from the world into which she fell.

Ephesian saints are seated in the heavenlies, but Pergamos saints dwelt as upon earth, "even where Satan's seat is ... where Satan dwelleth." This is never said of the full overcomers. Their "citizenship is in Heaven." "Antipas" means "against all." Everyone who is loyal to Christ is against all that is not of God and for Him; and all such suffer for it. "Thou holdest fast My Name," just as an unfaithful wife continues to bear her husband's name but flirts with other men. "Hast not denied My faith." With her lips she honors her husband; but, in her demeanor, she contradicts her testimony. She is not wholehearted. Oh, how many Christians are Pergamite in character today? And the number is increasing.

"But I have a few things against thee." Here are recorded four serious errors - two of doctrine and two of practice. "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the Children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." II Peter 2:15 informs us that "Balaam ... loved the wages of unrighteousness." Jude warns us against selfish shepherds who run "greedily after the error of Balaam for reward." Then, in Numbers twenty-two to twenty-four, we learn fully of this enchanter. God took advantage of his attempt to curse Israel to please Balac, and compelled him to utter four marvelous prophecies.

His error of prophesying for wages has become one of the greatest snares of Christendom. It stands squarely against Ephesian teaching and practice. No man can be a full overcomer while selling the Gospel, whether it be spoken or written. No one knows the subtle "wiles of the devil" in this particular, till he absolutely swings out to tell the whole story by voice and pen "without money and without price." All the arguments that men produce in favor of this error are only so many expressions of unbelief or ignorance of the clear teaching of the whole Scripture. The Catholic hierarchy is the fullest expression of Balaamism, or serving for hire. This spirit of a hireling ministry prevails in Protestantism also. Many of God's true servants are caught in this snare, because they do not see "the simplicity that is in Christ" - II Corinthians 11:3.

But for Revelation 2:14 we would not know that Balaam seduced Israel into idolatry. He failed to curse Israel. Of course, he failed to obtain the great reward and high honor which Balac promised him, and he "returned to his place" - Numbers 24:25. But he could not lose sight of that glittering gold and sparkling crown of honor. He concocted a scheme that was effectual. He induced Balac to invite Israel to the sacrifice of their gods - "And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel" - Numbers 25:2, 3. God slew them for their idolatry.

Reader, do you mark the close relation between eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication? Do you believe that this is going on among Christians today? If not, why is this charge found in Revelation 2:14? And why the detailed instruction in I Corinthians five and ten? And why the cautions in Galatians five

and Ephesians five? These references are not to be limited to physical idolatry and adultery only; they have a far deeper spiritual application. Some men spurn these things in the natural even boasting that, though they are married, yet they do not live as husbands. Others, for example the Pope and all Catholic ministers, do not marry. But they dare to assume a headship that is not theirs at all - a lordship over God's heritage - virtually making the Bride of Christ their bride. The saints who follow them and bow down to them and who acknowledge their carnal headship are guilty of spiritual adultery. The Holy Spirit makes it equivalent to worshiping idols. Paul wrote, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" - I Corinthians 10:14. John wrote, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" - I John 5:21. Oh, beloved, let us recognize only one Head. Worship only Him, and stand for the Truth whatever the cost.

NICOLAITANISM

"So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" - 2:15. This doctrine is akin to Balaamism. It paved the way for it. The deeds of Nicolaitanism were already lurking around the Ephesian assembly, for the candlestick Examiner said - "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds (works) of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate" - 2:6. In Pergamos, it is not only their deeds or works but their doctrine. They are not only lurking in the background, but the assembly is tolerating the teaching. What is the meaning of "Nicolaitanism"?

"Nico" is from the Greek "nikao" which means "to conquer, to prevail, to overcome." Would you think it? This is the very word that is repeatedly rendered "overcometh" in these chapters. It is the same word translated "prevailed" in chapter five - "The Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book." "Laos," the other part of this word, means "people."

Therefore, "Nicolaitanism" means "ruler, or overcomer of the people." Now you see the origin of the common ecclesiastical words, "clergy" and "laity."

Jesus Christ was no clergyman. He was a servant. He did not lord it "over God's heritage" - I Peter 5:3. He died for the Church "that He might sanctify and cleanse it." "We be brethren," not masters and slaves. "So we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another" - Romans 12:5. Each individual saint is to be a "nico," or overcomer; not over another saint whom he pleases to call "laos," but over the world. Yes, the full overcomers also overcome this man-rule, which invites Balaam to come and preach for hire; and which, of course, ends in sacrificing to idols and committing spiritual fornication. Pergamites "are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among" them - I Corinthians 5:2. The Spirit of Christ is not "nico-las" (laos), or overcomer of other believers; but "nico-pass," or overcomer over all things which are opposed to Christ.

Do you wonder at the sharp threat of the Searcher of hearts? "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth" - 2:16. First, the shepherd of the flock must repent of his toleration of evil doctrine; then some of his sheep will also repent.

Such repentance will, of course, cause separation. These become overcomers, though of a lower rank than those of Smyrna and Philadelphia, and they receive also a lesser reward. This we shall see when we study the theme of overcomings.

THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

"I know thy works, and charity (love), and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first" - 2:19.

As those of Ephesus, who were not full overcomers, are seen next in Pergamos; so those of Pergamos, who are not full overcomers in that rank, are seen next in Thyatira representatively. A comparison of the two letters is proof sufficient of this fact. There are overcomers in Thyatira also; but their rewards are, of course, less than those of the Pergamites.

"Thyatira" means "sacrifice of labor." She is the fullest expression of self-effort, a hotbed of legality. The commendations seem to be very flattering; but, the contrasting blame shows that Thyatira's charity and ministry are not wholesome, because they are not walking in the Spirit.

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" - 2:20. The striking point of likeness between this assembly and Pergamos is that they both "commit fornication, and ... eat things sacrificed unto idols." The points of contrast are many, and show her sad degenerated state. Not only are there here "them that hold the doctrine of Balaam"; but the assembly itself, represented by Jezebel, actually teaches these idolatrous practices. Nicolaitanism has become so interwoven with the life of this assembly, that neither its deeds nor doctrines are even mentioned. It is sad indeed, when God does no longer reprove His people for their wrongs.

Who is Jezebel? Again we must revert to the Old Testament. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, a king of the Zidonians. Ahab, king of Israel, married her. "And Ahab ... took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him" - I Kings 16:30, 31. That heathen woman is known as the most wicked of women. One meaning of her name is "isle of the dunghill," which harmonizes with her deserved destiny - "And the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field" - II Kings 9:37. She slew the Lord's prophets. She stirred up her discouraged husband into murderous hate. Jehu exclaimed to her son - "The whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many" - II Kings 9:22-37. Consider that there were about five hundred years between Balaam's seducing Israel into idolatry and the wicked career of Ahab and Jezebel, and yet see the similarity. The root was the same. The fruit was far worse. Accordingly, we find the same facts concerning these assemblies. In Pergamos, the doctrine of Balaam is held; in Thyatira the wife of Balaam, so to speak, is the teacher daring to call "herself a prophetess" - 2:20.

The dispensational setting of Thyatira, no doubt, figures the Roman Catholic denomination. Her abundant works and her charitable orders suggest this. "That woman Jezebel" is the one mentioned in Matthew 13:33 - "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." The leaven is the evil doctrine of salvation by works, and the evil practice of "friendship of the world" - James 4:4. The woman herself is the denomination selfstyled "a prophetess." She has leavened all of Christendom with her evil teaching and practice. Her daughters the state churches, and her granddaughters the lesser denominations and organizations, all teach and practice some things akin to Catholicism.

What else is the meaning of reverend, infant baptism, elaborate church spires, confirmations, circumscriptions, and multiplied unreasonable unscriptural doctrines and practices? Our only individual and assembly safety is to keep to "the simplicity that is in Christ." By these marked resemblances of religious bodies to Catholicism, we readily discover who are the daughters.

But what is the other meaning of Jezebel? It is an astonishing eye-opener. It should shock our spiritual modesty from ever again having any "confidence in the flesh" - Philippians 3:3. Jezebel means "without cohabitation." She pretended to be a mother without having a husband. She herself was her only husband. Is this not Rome? Yes, she has "works, and the last more than the first." But they are not works of faith, but works of flesh; not labors of love, but labor of law most stringent. Yes, she has faith, but it is faith in her own works and doctrine and clergymen. She glories in her wealth and numbers. Her children are legion, but they are not born of the Spirit. Christ as Head does not receive the glory of being her Husband. Her children are simply the offspring of self-effort. This the Holy Spirit terms to whoredoms" and "witchcrafts" - II Kings 9:22. This Jezebel is labeled in great letters - "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" - 17:5.

Oh, the pain of the great heart of the Shepherd of grace. How few are free from this evil habit of attempting to get people saved by works, or by mixing works with faith. Not one denomination, scarcely one assembly, and what one Christian worker is wholly free from salvation by works or a continual struggle and striving to be accepted by Christ? Who stands unflinchingly for absolute grace? Who? Unlike the three former churches, Thyatira continues down to the end of this age.

Those who overcome in this rank keep "My (God's) works unto the end." They constitute the lowest class of overcomers. Lot is a type of this kind of believers.

THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

"These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" - 3:1. The description of the Judge is somewhat similar to that in the first letter. However, there is one important item of difference. In the first letter, Jesus "holdeth the seven stars"; here He only "hath ... the seven stars." Formerly, He controlled them; but, from the time of the Sardis condition, He was not granted absolute sway in Christendom. As the Holy Spirit is not dominated by Christ but cooperates with Him, likewise, many ministers pretend a similar attitude toward Him. Men refuse to give to the Lord the authority in teaching and control that His Headship demands. Good it were if they did really cooperate with Him; then the Spirit would operate through them.

"Sardis" means "escaping," or "that which remains," or "prince of joy." From Ephesus on, there has been a sad degeneration. The Pergamos church was the result of Ephesus refusing to repent. Once begun, degeneration becomes more degenerate. Let no one think that he can decline from walking in the light and not fall into greater error. Likewise, Pergamos as a congregation refused to repent of her toleration; hence, she became known as Thyatira in figure.

Those who repented became Sardis. They escaped with what little truth and life remained. As compared with prevailing conditions, they had great victory; therefore, Sardis was then the "prince of joy." Therefore, dispensationally, Sardis stands for Protestantism. She escaped from the deplorable Thyatira conditions which ruined Pergamos. To understand this letter fully, we need to bear in mind that it describes Protestantism from its beginning to the end of this age. Catholicism has had no revivals, knows nothing of real life nor of spiritual power. Protestantism started in a flame of revival - out of dead works into justification by faith, under Luther, about 1500 A.D.

Revivals have been the order ever since. But the real abiding life and power, which she has professed, have not held on their way. A reputation better than the actual condition has prevailed in Christendom. "A name that thou livest, and art dead," sad to say, has followed immediately nearly every local and general revival. The various items of complaint against Sardis are pitiful. Only one lone commendation - "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." A fivefold exhortation is called forth by her condition - "Be watchful... strengthen the things which remain ... remember ... hold fast ... repent."

Behold the warning - "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." This corresponds with the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:42-51 and with Paul's words in I

Thessalonians 5:4. Those who do not repent of the degenerate conditions in Christendom and watch will not escape the tribulation period, but will remain on earth. They will end in Laodicea, where they will have one more opportunity to repent.

Therefore, there are only two classes of people in Sardis - those who are really saved, "a few names"; and the great number who have a reputation or a profession of being Christians. This explains 3:5 that puzzles so many saints - "I will not blot out his name." He who has life - the new birth - whatever his reputation, his name cannot be blotted out. He who has only a name and a profession of life, however great, will be overtaken as by a thief in the night. He will be visited by the terrible calamities of the end time. The Lord will come upon him in judgment. Thus, it will be proven that he had a reputation and a profession only, that his name was never written in the Lamb's book of life. As stated before, the overcomers in Pergamos constitute the Sardis company. Hence, all those who have fallen asleep in Jesus in the Pergamite order of overcomers and those who will be translated from Sardis will be seen in Heaven as the innumerable company of chapter seven. They constitute the greater part of "the Body of Christ."

THE CHURCH AT 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 shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" - 3:7.

The points of similarity and contrast between Smyrna and this assembly are indeed interesting.

There is no blame against either. A crown awaits the faithfulness of each. The same legalists "which say they are Jews, and are not" are troubling both. But to the Philadelphians he says, "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee." Both are notified of trial and suffering but of particular blessings accruing from them.

"Philadelphia" means "brotherly love." Philadelphia and Smyrna believers are the only real brotherhood in the world. They "love one another with a pure heart fervently" - I Peter 1:22. Now these two are one and the same company. The Smyrnians suffer with Christ, may be cast into prison, and may die cruel deaths because of their loyalty to Jesus. Indeed they stand "in jeopardy every hour" and "die daily" - I Corinthians 15:30, 31. Nevertheless, they are full overcomers. They "are more than conquerors." If they die, they will come up in the first rank resurrection - even "the resurrection out from among the dead" - Philippians 3:11. The Philadelphians are those of the last days who will not die, but live as full overcomers - "spirit and soul and body ... preserved blameless" - till the first trumpet sounds - I Thessalonians 5:23.

Observe the character of the Judge here. "The key of David" means the authority to reign on earth as well as in Heaven. See Isaiah 22:22, which is here quoted. With this authority, Jesus opens a "door ... in Heaven," that the full overcomers may enter in. For they shall reign conjointly with Christ after they have likewise with Him judged Christendom, the world, and angels - I Corinthians 6. They entered the open door of privilege on earth - accepting all the Truth and walking in all the light, constantly looking for more - and engaged in the Divinely ordained good works.

The promised ground for entrance into this open door is thus expressed - "For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name" - 3:8. "A little strength" is a great compliment to this assembly. It is not said that the other churches had any strength.

The expressive phrase in this connection is "the Word of My patience"; that is, as the Lord has patiently waited till the Father willed His return, and bade us to wait steadfastly and look for His advent, so we do.

They live as if they really believe that He will return. Mark you, to keep "the Word of My patience ... behold, I come quickly" is far different from "till I come ... keepeth My works unto the end." The first, He will keep "from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." But the other will pass through the hour "unto the end."

What is "the hour of temptation"? That eventful hour will begin with the week of seven years. It will be worldwide. It is called "great tribulation" in 7:14. It will end with the casting of the beast and false prophet into the lake of fire, and Satan into the pit of the abyss or hell. The "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21 will be the severer part of that hour of temptation. It will begin in the middle of that seven years. It will pertain chiefly to Israel, and be confined to Palestine particularly. It is termed "a time of trouble" and "the abomination that maketh desolate" - Daniel 12:1, 11. That will be God's final chastisement of the nation Israel. "Judgment must begin at the house of God" - I Peter 4:17.

THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot" - 3:14, 15.

Observe the fullness and appropriateness of the title of the Judge in this letter. It agrees with 1:11 - "The first and the last." And, He has been "the Witness, faithful and true," for these nineteen hundred years. The Church is absolutely without excuse. Jesus Christ has done His part to the uttermost. He died and rose again - "the first begotten of the dead," the beginning of a new creation. He ascended on high, to make "intercession for us." Jesus sent the other Comforter to guide us "Into all Truth" and show us "things to come." Lastly, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ" - Ephesians 4:11, 12.

The Holy Spirit has spoken through these seven letters. Every condition has been fully described, every encouragement given, every warning pronounced, every prospect held forth to induce believers to press forward for the highest Prize. There has been absolutely no lack. Yet, what is the final decision of the candlestick Examiner? "Lukewarm." The Greek verb it "chilio," from which this word "lukewarm" is derived, means "to become warm, or soft, to melt, to luxuriate, to revel - "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" - II Timothy 3:4.

The word "Laodicea" means "just people." Yes, that is what the Church is in name, and what she should be in fact; but God declares her "neither cold nor hot." "Laodicea" also means "rights of the people." Democracy has been the political boast of this country. Other countries have adopted her policy - a government by the people and for the people. This spirit of religious democracy is getting a foothold in Christendom. Insubordination, lawlessness, unteachableness crop out everywhere. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes," under the plea of personal rights - Judges 21:25.

Laodicea revels softly in her luxurious works and supposed wealth and self-sufficiency; but Jehovah pronounces her "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." She does not know her true condition. There is not one word of commendation concerning this assembly.

The inevitable sentence is most solemnly expressive - "I will spew thee out of My mouth." Reader, do you understand that statement? We taste water by taking it into the mouth only. If it is lukewarm it nauseates, and is instantly expelled from the mouth. Likewise, viewed dispensationally, this "just people" falsely so-called was never incorporated into Christ's Body.

They are no part of Him, nor of His true Church. It is very evident that Laodicea does not dwell in God, nor does Christ dwell in her. Else why does He stand at the door and knock? Nay! Laodicea has "a form of godliness," but denies "the power thereof." She has a profession without any possession. She is in apostasy.

The non-overcomers of Sardis will continue unto the revelation of Christ, when He will come upon her "as a thief" - 3:3; 16:15. Laodiceanism will be the pronounced feature of the end of that period. Indeed, Laodiceanism is prevalent today, though it is the Sardian time. "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness" is standing at the door of Christendom today, outside the door, making His final appeal to her saying, "I counsel thee to buy of Me." Verse twenty in the Diaglot is striking - "Lo, I have stood and I knock" - showing that the Divine entreaty is going on today. Three indispensable products the Lord offers to this wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked-people; namely, "gold tried," "white raiment," and "eye salve" - the very least that any believer should have.

"Gold tried" figures Divine life. Through faith in Jesus we obtain this new heavenly Divine life, which is the

blessed beginning of true and eternal riches. We are born again. Man, though he be a millionaire, is "poor" if he is not a partaker of the Divine nature.

"White raiment" speaks of Christ's righteousness, which becomes ours when we believe on Him. Our "nakedness" before God, which sin entailed, is then covered. God sees us in a new white spotless robe, even as He saw Adam in his new fur coat - Genesis 3:21. "Gold tried" refers to our state. "White raiment" refers to our standing.

"Eye salve" symbolizes the Holy Spirit, by receiving whom we have the anointing that abideth. He illuminates, lubricates, and heals our whole being. As here intimated, the three adorable Personalities of the Godhead - Father, Son, and Spirit - unite in redeeming and saving mankind. The above three initial items of the Gospel are always freely offered to men. They are emphasized especially now in the closing days of this age. God is calling out a people who shall fully accept this threefold Divine offer, and thereby fully overcome this Laodiceans condition. They will constitute a special company - the end-time link between the Church and the Kingdom. They will be the last rank of the Church to be translated into Heaven.

Observe that every assembly is addressed through the pastor. This one is counseled to buy tried gold, white raiment, and eye salve. This proves unavailing. Hence, the Judge exclaims, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." This is the final and most positive evidence that the Lord, the Head of the Church, is on the outside. No one knocks to get out of a house. Furthermore, He adds, "I will come in." There is no hope of Him being received by the assembly as such, but only by individuals - "I will come in to him." This is solemnly significant. Only for the sake of those who may yet repent, the Lord delays spuing Protestantism out of His mouth. Doubtless, that will follow the apostasy. Paul's "great conflict" for them "at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh" is pathetic and prophetic. The Holy Spirit yearned through him over the Church in the end-time. Epaphras also was deeply concerned for them. See Colossians 2:1 and 4:12-16.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVIEW

The church in Ephesus and the church of the Laodiceans are the only two of the seven named elsewhere. They are first and last in John's list of seven; and figure the highest and lowest, the beginning and ending conditions of the Church. Laodicea is the climacteric result of Ephesus leaving her preeminent love, or love of the heavenly Bridegroom. Why does John give so little space to Christendom? Because he is stating the decision only of the Judge, who pronounces righteous sentence according to Paul's Gospel which has set forth full provision for the Church to know and do the will of God and creditably represent Jesus in the earth. See Romans 2:16 and I Timothy 1:11. Our attitude to Paul's message determines the Judge's decision and rewards to us.

Smyrna and Philadelphia are free from any semblance of blame. To them only are crowns definitely promised. Smyrna, called "poor" in this world's goods, is truly "rich." Philadelphia, seemingly weak being small and hidden, has "a little strength (power)" - dynamite - which is complimentary; for this is not said to any other. Not one word of eulogy is pronounced concerning Laodicea.

Ephesus, addressed first, had the "first love," the highest privilege, the fullest instruction. but was the first to fail. Smyrna and Pergamos are the perpetuation of Ephesus. They of Ephesus who continued in their "pre-eminent love" became the church of the Smyrnians, or the full overcomers down to the present time, viewed dispensationally. The non-overcomers of Ephesus became the Pergamos assembly. They rejected Ephesian truth. Real Ephesian saints, now Smyrnians, are seated in the heavenlies with Christ. By faith they maintained that place. Pergamos dwells on earth, flirts with the world, is comforted and controlled by the world, tolerates wrong doctrine, harbors false teachers, and refuses to repent. The Spirit stirs some of her members against prevailing conditions. These are called out, and become Sardis. The rest are termed "Thyatira," "sacrifice of labor," after her real nature. As Smyrnians are the first rank victors of Ephesus who die during this age; so the Sardians are the second rank victors, or those escaping from Pergamos, who died in this order or rank. That is, Sardis is to Pergamos what Smyrna and Philadelphia are to Ephesus.

Two great religious powers now appear in Christendom - Catholicism, figured by Thyatira: and, Protestantism, figured by Sardis. These move side by side to the end. By translation, the overcomers of Sardis will escape the fiercest phase of the coming judgments of the tribulation period. The overcomers out of Thyatira will be miraculously preserved or suffer martyrdom during the tribulation days.

There are no translations from Thyatira, which is the fourth rank in the Church. They comprise the feet portion of the mystical Body of Christ - Zechariah 14:4. Non-overcomers, of course, not being saved will be shamefully overthrown - Revelation 17, 18.

Philadelphia is God's oasis in the desert condition of these closing days. Ephesian saints are here, but

known by another name - "brotherly love." The Philadelphia church is a full overcomer, prevailing over three conditions - half-hearted Sardis, domineering Thyatira, and lukewarm Laodicea. As love was the prevailing feature of full overcomers at the beginning, so is it also at the end.

Dear Reader, with which company are you identified? Paul said, "I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God. I have espoused you to one Husband (Christ), that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ" - II Cor. 11:2. Do you accept that espousal? Do you wish to be one of the blameless company, one of the brotherly love class, so as to be a part of the Bride? If not, why not?

DISPENSATIONAL SETTING

The seven churches, by their respective religious conditions, foreshadow existing conditions during certain periods of this present age. Ephesus, the powerful and promising period, extends from Pentecost to 300 A.D. Pergamos, the com- promising and declining period, begins here with Constantine's subtle courtesy to the Christians and reaches to 1500 A.D. Thyatira and Sardis here introduce two opposite conditions. It is generally called "The Reformation Period." Under Martin Luther, a revival began which has continued and increased to the present time.

Philadelphia introduces the translation period, during which time the Church is being ripened for the harvest and harvest home. Doubtless, that time is now and will continue until the whole Body is glorified. Smyrna figures full overcomers of the entire Church Age, who die in faith and are awaiting the first trumpet sound. Laodicea expresses a direct opposite condition which stamps the present time as the lukewarm period, as well as the translation period. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" - Acts 15:18. All the rivers of Thy grace I claim, Over every promise write my name.

OVERCOMINGS AND REWARDS

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" - 2:7. This is the first and main promise to full overcomers. When the Lord created Adam and placed him in Eden, He gave him the privilege of eating of "the tree of life ... in the midst of the garden." But when he sinned, he forfeited that privilege - Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:22-24. Redemption canceled that forfeiture, and did more. It provided that the new creation shall eat not simply of that material symbolic tree of life, but of Christ Himself the true "Tree of life." When on earth, He announced Himself to be "the living bread which came down from Heaven" - John 6:51. A lesser rank of overcomers have the lesser promise of feeding on Christ as "the hidden manna" - 2:17. Is it not so today? Is not Christ only manna to most believers, rather than "the old corn of the land"? - Joshua 5:11, 12. This can hardly be regarded as a reward for overcoming. Rather, it is a promise of being sustained by the same life that we feed upon here. Smyrna - Philadelphia believers must feed on Christ as "the living bread" in order to be full overcomers. In varying degrees, all believers eat of "the Tree of life." Since there are degrees of overcoming, there will be also grades of rewards. We will consider them separately.

FIRST RANK REWARDS

Smyrna and Philadelphia are hemispheres of one victorious whole. Hence, their rewards must be studied together, for each receives the same recompense as the other. Smyrna demands our first notice. Two items are promised to Smyrna victors: First: "A crown of life" for their faithfulness unto death. A crown is also offered to Philadelphia saints. Faithfulness is the one simple condition for obtaining the crown. Tribulation was continuous, imprisonment was foretold, martyrdom was possible, death was inevitable; but a "crown of life" is eternally sure.

The second item is negative: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" - 2:11.

This is the present particular heritage of being full overcomers because they "die daily." They are exposed to death continually. Death is judgment, the penalty for sin. "The second death" is "the lake of fire" (20:14); that is, "eternal judgment" (Hebrews 6:2), even to everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord" - II Thess. 1:9. Christ met that penalty for us by dying to sin once in our stead. He tasted "death for every man" - Hebrews 2:9. That was the first death. Therefore, the death of a believer is not a death, but a sleep. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" - John 11:11. He died once in his Substitute. He could not die again. This is the meaning of Jesus' words in John 11:26 - "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." "The body (of a believer) is dead because of sin" - Romans 8:10. Therefore, sickness and death are no longer judgments for sin, but simply results of it. Full overcomers reckon thus with God.

Let us put it personally. If I do not steadfastly acknowledge that I was judged at Calvary, by constantly judging the deeds of my body and the desires of my fleshly mind and thus "keep under my body"; and if I do not walk in the Spirit but walk as men, my Father may chasten me by permitting me to be sick. I might even "sin unto death" - I John 5:16. For lack of self-judgment - "Many are weak and sickly among you, and many

sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" - I Corinthians 11:30, 31. Premature death means being hurt by the second death. If I live for my own carnal gratification and seek my own fleshly ease and advancement, I practically deny the death penalty of the Cross and throw myself across the path of Divine judgment. I am liable to be sick and die prematurely, liable to injury by accident, possibly fatal injury, die out of God's will, out of due time, die in defeat - "hurt of the second death" - 2:11. This by no means implies that a believer will suffer in the lake of fire. It is a "hurt," and not a final judgment. But, thank God, such misfortune can never come to him who walks in the perfect will of God. No matter what befalls him, he is not hurt of the second death. If he dies, if he is martyred, he will be raised and taken up to Heaven before "the hour of His (God's) judgment" - 14:7.

Philadelphia rewards await us. Aside from the seven present notes of eulogy and encouragement to this company, there hangs high before them a superexcellent fourfold reward; or it is one grand reward with three bold embellishments - "a pillar" and three sublime names upon it. This is the fullest and greatest reward. How it behooves us to look into it deeply. The phrase "my God" occurs four times in this promise. The word "my" occurs only once beside - 3:21. These facts afford special strength and comfort. "My God," saith Jesus, "is back of all." Where shall this victor appear? "In the temple of My God." The whole Body of believers is growing into a "holy temple in the Lord." But the first rank overcomers have a pronounced place in that temple - "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Study Ephesians 2:19-22. Such saints are destined to become pillars in that temple. Oh, the marvels of Divine grace! Pillars are solid massive supports, usually in a conspicuous place. Their towering greatness greets our eyes upon entering a building, or confronts us in its wide halls. Some saints shall share the shining honor of such an inspiring position in the final glorious and eternal temple of our Triune God.

Beloved, shall it be you and I? "And he shall go no more out." Whoever wins that place will have it forever. By the fight of faith we hold fast His Word, do not deny His Name, and keep the Word of His patience, that no man may take our coming crown. His Name be praised forever!

Then observe the embellishments emblazoned upon that pillar:

First: "The Name of My God." Some believers become such large "partakers of the Divine nature," that they appear like God Himself - II Peter 1:4; Revelation 19:10. They become steadfast, faithful, immovable, uncompromising, and fervent in love, because they are "filled with all the fullness of God" - Ephesians 3:19.

Second: "And the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem." There are three Jerusalems: One is the earthly city where David's throne will be. Paul informs us of "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" - Hebrews 12:22. This is the present throne of God, whereon Jesus also is now sitting mediating for His people. This is the oldest city known. This "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all"; that is, our mother grace - Galatians 4:26.

But the "new Jerusalem" will be composed of "living stones," and will be the eternal "habitation of God" - I Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:22. What is the name of that city? Revelation 21:2, 9 answers that it is "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife." Observe closely that the city itself is the Bride. "That great city," descending with the glory of God, with its huge wall and stupendous foundations is declared to be "as a Bride adorned for her Husband" - 21:10, 2. Not all of that heavenly company constitute the Bride of the Lamb - Revelation 21. How then can anyone teach that the whole Church will be the Bride?

Finally, the third glittering embellishment is "My new Name." Pray tell, what is that Name? It cannot be "Jesus" for that has been His well-known personal Name as a Man for over nineteen hundred years. That is His honored Name of authority and power by which alone men are saved and before whom all creation must bow. It cannot be "the Word of God (19:13); for that was His Name in the beginning - John 1:1. It cannot be an old name or title, but a "new Name." There is only one answer. If the New Jerusalem is the Bride and is to be engraven on the pillar - overcomers, it follows that the Name "Bridegroom" will be His "new Name."

The Bride of the Lamb will bear the imprint, the likeness of her Husband. Hers will be no ordinary training in this world. Hers is no easy, self-seeking, shrinking career. She fellowships His sufferings and is "made conformable unto His death" - Philippians 3:10. The phrase, "the Lamb's Wife," is profoundly significant. "His Wife hath made herself ready" - 19:7. It is not hard to see that "Bridegroom" is the new Name. It is mentioned in reference to Jesus on three occasions only - Matthew 9:15; 25:1; John 3:29. It was such a hidden truth that Paul never calls Jesus "Bridegroom." He leaves that to be revealed by the Spirit through other Scriptures. He implies this truth in Ephesians 5:31 and II Corinthians 11:2. "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ."

God be eternally praised! Some saints shall share these highest honors with the blessed Son of God. Let us

see it clearer. The full-fledged victors constitute the strong formidable members of that living temple. They become so like the Lord through yieldedness to Him here, through eating all His gracious Word, through deepening fellowship with Him in His trials and triumphs, and through Christ dwelling and growing up in them, that their Divine-human Bride nature received from the Bridegroom will be transcendently conspicuous and glorious.

As "the Bridegroom," "He shall come to be glorified in His saints (holy ones)" - "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" - Romans 8:17. And, as Jesus or Savior, He shall "be admired in all them that believe ... in that day" - II Thess. 1:10. A very short time before that day, the day of Christ's revelation, the cry will be heard: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" - Matthew 25:6. That cry is not yet being made, for Jesus distinctly declared that it shall be "then" and "at midnight"; that is, that cry will be sounded out sometime during the seven-year period of Christ's coming - Matthew 25:1, 6. It will be after the Bride is translated. For the wise virgins are not the Bride. That will be the 144,000, the last group to get into the wedding. Oh, who will sing out and swing out in the power and love of Ephesian doctrine and be a real Philadelphia saint? Who will take Christ for all? Through Him conquer all? And with Him inherit all?

SECOND RANK REWARDS

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" - 2:17.

This is the promise to Pergamos believers. All believers are overcomers in some measure - "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" - I John 5:4. The nature and measure of the reward is determined by the measure of the overcoming. Only those who overcome all things can hope to "inherit all things" - 21:7. Inasmuch as some fail to overcome fully, of course, their rewards will be limited.

Be it remembered that "manna" was Israel's food in the wilderness - Deut. 8:16; Psalm 78:24. But "old corn" was their food in Canaan - Joshua 5:11, 12. As a reminder of their diet in the wilderness, "a pot" of manna was taken along when they went into Canaan - Exodus 16:33. A checkered Christian experience, one having only some victories marred by defeats, is typified by Israel in the wilderness. Such saints have not learned Christ as "the old corn," or "the true bread from Heaven." They do not actually know Him in resurrection life and power, else they would not resort to their own resources. They know Him only as "manna"; that is, as an indistinct portion, a "what is it?" This accounts for their defeats. The real victorious Christ from Heaven is hidden from them; therefore, Christ as "hidden manna" will be their portion hereafter. Only as we know Him and appropriate Him now, will we know Him in the ages to come. However, everyone will be satisfied in his sphere.

The "new name" on "a white stone" affords similar instruction as the above. The "psephos," or stone, was used for counting and voting by the Greeks. When cast into an urn it expressed either the approval or disapproval, commendation or condemnation, of the one whose name it bore.

Sometimes condemnation was indicated by a hole in the stone. "White" speaks of purity or freedom from sin, and agrees with the "white robes" of chapter seven. "A new name having been written," speaks of the new creation. As a reward for having overcome in this rank, the overcomer shall receive from the Judge the unmarred assurance of being in the new creation. The Lord casts the ballot of approval into the urn of His own reckoning concerning His child. Wondrous grace!

The reward of the Sardian overcomers is joined with the above inasmuch as they are in the same rank with the Pergamites. The Lord declares, "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment" - 3:4, 5. Note the correspondence here with the "white stone" above. The only difference between the Pergamos and Sardis overcomers is this - the former fall asleep in Jesus and the latter live until He comes. Hence, each receives the same reward as the other.

Further: "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." This by no means implies that, if people are once saved but do not overcome, they will be lost. Legalism blots out the names of those who do not overcome, and pronounces them heretics and lost forever. But Christ the Judge, who looks upon the heart, declares in strongest terms that He will in no wise blot out their names. Nay! He votes them in by the "stone" of His own reckoning. In the same emphatic term, He declares that pillar-saints in the coming eternal temple "shall go no more out." Persecutors cast our names out from the world's honor rolls and from religious records; but God assures us that He will never blot them out for they have eternal life.

AN INTERESTING CONTRAST

The reward of the first rank overcomer is far greater than that of the second. The first becomes something; but the second only receives something. The first is made a pillar; the second receives a stone. The first receives three great names written upon himself; the second receives only his own name written on a stone. Oh, let us learn Christ as our all-sufficient present life, and feed on Him continually; and walk, work, and war in His strength, that we may not miss the full victor's reward. Let us not be content with the hope of receiving Pergamos and Sardis rewards only. Remember that, whether we wake or sleep in Jesus, our remuneration is determined by faith's estimate and appropriation of Christ. Those who fall asleep in Pergamos will be raised to meet those who shall be translated from Sardis.

THIRD RANK REWARDS

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with My Father in His throne" - 3:21.

The full victors overcome the Laodicean condition or lukewarmness to the uttermost, of course. This is self-evident. But here is a special reward to a special crowd. This letter stands at the last because it expresses the last sad state of Protestantism. Lukewarmness is one of the most subtle and formidable obstacles to the believer. There is a company who does not appear with the full overcomers, and yet do overcome this foe. Lukewarmness lies like a crouching thief at the very root of a victorious life. "Certainly it is right and noble to be a Christian," cries lukewarmness. "But it is not necessary to be extreme. Be quiet, be sober, be easy, have a good time, do not make a fool of yourself, be respect-able, be sensible. Oh, yes, be an earnest worker, give freely; but do not be narrow. There is good in all churches, in every religion." Such is the kind (?) wise (?) counsel of Laodiceanism. It does not want real life and power. It ignores the Christ of crucifixion and of miracles and of power. It ignores the simplicity of Christ and the supremacy which belongs to Him, and exalts means and methods and carnal men. It loves form, foam, fuss, flowers, fables, flattery, and feasibility. Oh, how the Laodicean shudders and shrieks before the living piercing Truth - the pointed, practical, and powerful Truth. How it winces before reality - a real conviction, real salvation, real joy in the Holy Spirit, real Divine dynamite, real ecstatic glory; in short, real "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" - Romans 14:17.

Hence, the overcomer is like God Himself. He spews this condition out of his mouth. He dare not yield to it; he cannot endure it. He meets it everywhere, but greets it never. He stands alone, a misunderstood reviled fanatic, a tower of living faith in the real living God and in the lovely but rejected Christ of the Bible. Yes, the overcomer stands alone here, but he shall be with Christ forever. He has no certain dwelling place here, but he shall "sit" yonder.

But let us notice the exact character of his sitting. The Lord Jesus said, "All power (authority) is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" - Matthew 28:18. But He is not yet using it because "the Lord's day" has not yet begun. Christ is not sitting as a King on His Father's throne, but as an Intercessor. He is perpetuating His High Priestly career. He is serving His people as subordinate to the Father, not coordinate with Him. These overcomers of Laodicea will reign with Christ as subordinate to Him.

The Bride will reign conjointly with Christ, even as it is written of the first pair - "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them (Adam and Eve together) have dominion" - Genesis 1:26. But that man was "the figure of Him that was to come," even the Last Adam - Christ; and the Last Eve - Christ's Bride. But it is written of the latter, "If we suffer (or endure), we shall also reign with Him" - II Timothy 2:12. Suffering is the price of reigning.

The great revival in Jerusalem by the advent of the Holy Spirit was a revival of kingdom hopes. The twelve apostles and the seven deacons of Acts six were full overcomers for that time. They rose above the lukewarmness of Israel. They won the laurels among the lukewarm or "just people" (so-called) at that time. They became the connecting link between the Kingdom and the Church. Likewise, the 144,000 of whom those early workers were the "firstfruit" will become the connecting link between the Church and the Kingdom in the beginning of the next age. They will be the full overcomers for that time. The 144,000 are the five wise virgins of Matthew twenty-five, or the manly son of Revelation twelve.

Let the reader consider Paul's "great conflict" or care for the Laodiceans. Those who overcome the lukewarm condition at that time will be a special company. The present decline among believers points to that day. The slumber of Matthew twenty-five is already stealing over us.

Some are yielding to it. When these shall hear the final call to "be zealous therefore, and repent" of their sluggishness because the Lord loves them and longs to "sup" with them - when they hear the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom and His Bride are coming, come ye forth to meet them" - then they will arise and trim their

lamps and hasten to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Church, save the feet portion ("His feet" - Zechariah 14:4), will pass to glory in the first, second, and third ranks.

FOURTH RANK REWARDS

"He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father" - 2:26, 27.

The description of the Judge - "His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass" together with the phrase "unto the end" - shows at once that Thyatira passes far into the tribulation period. Some of her people pass entirely through that period. The last hours of that time will be "the great day of His wrath" - 6:17. The phrase "My works" is a great contrast with "the Word of My patience" in the Philadelphia church. If saints observe the latter, they will not need to experience the terrible tribulation. They will be kept out of the dark hour of trial through which the other must inevitably pass. The rewards of fourth rank overcomers are that they stand on Mt. Olivet as the feet portion of the Body of Christ - Zechariah 14:4. There are three items in this reward:

First: Our Lord will conquer the nations, and rule them through the fourth rank overcomers - Psalm 2:9. Compare Revelation 19:15. Jesus will reign from Heaven, His Bride reigning conjointly with Him.

Second: The 144,000, the man child, will reign subordinately to Him.

Third: The overcomers from the Thyatira condition will reign subordinately to the 144,000. God only knows who are the last ones counted in the Church. "And I will give him the Morning Star" - 2:28. Comparing this with Numbers 24:17 and II Peter 1:19 and Revelation 22:16 we learn that this promise is to Israel alone. The "Morning Star," or "Day Star," is the harbinger of the day. In the dark closing end of the great tribulation period Jesus will appear to the saints as the "Morning Star," an assurance of the Millennial Day just ahead, when He will come to Israel as "the Sun of righteousness ... with healing in His wings" - Malachi 4:2.

THE LAST TO ASCEND

However, during the reign of anti-Christ, some believers will be slain because of their testimony to the Truth. See Revelation 6:9-11; 15:2, 3; 20:4. These will stand in triumph upon the "sea of glass." The two witnesses of chapter eleven will probably be among this company. The last ones slain will possibly be caught up to Heaven without being buried even like the two witnesses - 13:15; 14:13. These are believing Jews, "the remnant of her seed"; that is, of the woman in the wilderness - 12:17. See chapter fifteen. They also shall live and reign with Christ.

Just as I am,
Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down.
Now to be Thine, yea. Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come!

THE PARABLES AND THE CHURCHES

There is a very interesting correspondence between the seven parables of Matthew thirteen and the seven churches named in Revelation two and three. He who spoke the former dictated the writing of the latter.

THE FOUR SORTS OF SOIL

Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23

EPHESUS

The Word of God is the Seed. It falls into four kinds of hearts and reaches the four corners of the earth. The letter to the church in Ephesus answers to this parable. In it were grades of good ground hearers, and those who left their first love because they became offended by persecutions and choked by cares of life and the deceitfulness of carnal riches.

THE GOOD SEED AND TARES

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

SMYRNA

In this parable, the children of the Kingdom are the good seed and the children of Satan are the tares. The devil is building an assembly to his glory. The church in Smyrna answers to this parable. They were all good seed, faithful children of the living and true God. But, a "synagogue of Satan" also was in that city, where the tares gathered for mock worship.

THE MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 13:31, 32

PERGAMOS

This parable figures the small beginning of Christendom, its rapid growth, and its spectacular and overgrown culmination. The saved people are scattered throughout this condition, and many of them are defiled by it. The church in Pergamos answers graphically to this parable. Not only "the synagogue of Satan," but "Satan's seat" is in it. The devil has many progressive headquarters in the midst of Christendom, which ignorant people admire. Consider the great prosperous organizations who do not hold to the Truth of the Gospel.

LEAVEN HIDDEN IN MEAL

Matthew 13:33

THYATIRA

In the three preceding parables, we read of seed - good and bad. The pure Seed is the Word of God. That is expressed in this parable as "three measures of meal," or the doctrine of God. The essential and basic facts of this doctrine are the three Persons of the Deity and their respective offices. Leaven always figures evil doctrine and practice. The primary spoonful of leaven was legality, or the religion of human effort. The phrase "a woman" means a religious body of people.

The Catholic Church is responsible for this condition. While she acknowledges that the atonement which Jesus wrought was necessary, yet she says, "It was not enough." All other religions spring from this devilish root; hence, the many varieties of carnal and Christ-dishonoring fruit. The church of Thyatira answers to this parable. The whole of Christendom is leavened today with evil doctrine, which will culminate in Laodiceanism.

THE TREASURE HID IN THE FIELD

Matthew 13:44

SARDIS

This parable refers to the Church of Jesus Christ, "which He hath purchased with His own blood."

This is part of the mystery "hid in God" - Ephesians 3:9. The church in Sardis answers to this parable, because it fore-shadowed the awakening from the dark ages into Protestantism: During this age, Jesus has been calling out a people to His own Name. These constitute the Body of Christ.

THE "ONE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE"

Matthew 13:45, 46

PHILADELPHIA

This parable refers to the Bride of Christ. The "goodly pearls," sought by the merchant man, constitute the entire Church. But the Bride company is mentioned as "one pearl." She is undivided in faith and love and hope. She believes God unswervingly, loves Christ supremely, and hopes for His coming steadfastly. The church of the Philadelphians answers to this parable.

This church possesses all the characteristics of a pearl - its beauty, its smoothness, its solidity, its firmness, its costliness. The Bride is "but one," a "dove," the "fair" one, the "undefiled," "the choice one," the beautiful one - Song of Solomon 4:1; 5:2; 6:9.

THE NET CAST INTO THE SEA

Matthew 13:47-50

LAODICEA

This parable takes us through the Millennium to the consummation of God's great scheme with mankind. The phrase, "the end of the world" means "the consummation of the age" - Matthew 13:49. Compare verses thirty-nine to forty-three. The church in Laodicea answers only to the beginning of the next age on which it will entail some evil effects. When Christ will be crowned, He shall have "put down all rule and all authority and power" - I Corinthians 15:24. At the end, the angels will gather out of the kingdom "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity"; for some will pretend to yield to Him - 13:41; Psalm 66:3; 81:14, 15. The culmination of this will be manifested in the nations of Gog and Magog who gather around the camp of the saints and Jerusalem, and fire will come down and devour them.

THINGS YET FUTURE

Revelation Four to Twenty-Two

"After these things, I looked and behold a door opened in the Heaven. And the first Voice which I heard as of a trumpet, was talking with me saying, Come up hither and I will show thee things which must take place

after these things. And immediately I became in spirit; and behold a throne was placed (or being placed) in the Heaven, and upon the throne One sitting" - 4:1, 2 Greek. Compare Isaiah 14:13, 14.

The third great division of the book begins with this chapter. The second vision viewpoint is marked by John's entrance into the opened Heaven. On that occasion, he heard the same mighty Voice which had spoken in the first grand division of this interesting series. Instead of turning to see the Speaker, he was summoned up to Heaven. Here we are introduced into the throne room of our Lord Jesus Christ. He earned this honored place by His sufferings and death for humanity. In this fourth chapter, He is seen as God and Creator. In chapter five, He is seen as "the Lamb of God" and "Redeemer." Compare Daniel 7:9 - "I beheld till the thrones were cast down (or set up), and the Ancient of days did sit." Daniel and John saw the placing of the thrones in Heaven. We read of principalities, powers, and wicked spirits in the heavenlies in Ephesians six. We are taught in Ephesians two, that God raised up His Son from the grave and also provisionally raised us up with Him and seated us with Him. Satan's throne now is in the lower regions of the heavens. He is "the prince of the power of the air" and "the god of this world" - Ephesians 2:2; II

Corinthians 4:4. Therefore, the conflict of spiritual saints is not with "flesh and blood," but with these wicked forces in the heavenlies. By faith we now dwell where we shall someday actually dwell, clothed with glorified bodies.

DESCRIPTION OF THE KING

"He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone" - 4:3. The nine-fold picture of Jesus Christ, in chapter one, was of Him as the Judge of Christendom. Here we have a picture of Him as the coming universal Ruler. Bear in mind that, though it reads as if those things had already happened, their fulfillment is yet future. Everything from chapter four to the end of the book was future to the apostle's view; and, it is future to us, because chapters two and three carry us through to the end of this Church Age.

The "jasper" of Scripture is like our diamond, "clear as crystal." Compare 21:11. It means, "He will be made bare, or prominent." The "sardius" was the carnelian in various shades of red, also the color of raw flesh. It means "ruddiness," which suggests the humanity of Christ. Having redeemed mankind by His death and resurrection, God will display Him in great glory before the vast heavens by and by. A rainbow spanned the heavens after the flood, the token to Noah that the earth would not again be destroyed by water. But John saw a rainbow around the throne before the threatened judgments, token of God's mercy in the midst of the tribulation days. The "emerald," or green, foretells of life out of death - "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" - II Peter 3:13. (Look for a full description of these and other gems at the end of the book).

"And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones (rather than seats); and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold" - 4:4 Greek. Some full-grown saints will reign conjointly with Jesus Christ.

Crowns of gold speak of the highest order of crowns. The figure twenty-four was the number of the priestly courses under the Old Covenant. Twelve is the number of Divine government, and twice twelve is the strengthened authority that believers will have when crowned and reigning with Christ. "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" - 4:5. This speaks of Jehovah's majesty, might, holiness, and right, and His justice in punishing the wicked which He is about to do. As a drenching rain is preceded by dreadful thunder and dazzling lightning, so the judgments about to be poured out upon a Christ-rejecting world are told out in symbol from Heaven. See I Samuel 12:17, 18.

The "seven Spirits" express the sevenfold fullness of the Holy Spirit in whatever capacity He may act. The "lamps of fire burning" suggest the indignation of the Holy Ghost against the wicked and His clear illumination of men, leaving everyone without excuse. The "seven horns" of the Lamb indicate His sufficiency of power, and the "seven eyes" His perfection of penetration. The two symbols being "the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (5:6) indicate that the Holy Spirit is the executive Agent of the Godhead in accomplishing His purposes on the earth. The Holy Spirit executes the will of the Father and of the Son, whether in dispensing mercy or judgment. This proves that the Holy Spirit is not that "what withholdeth" or letteth - II Thess. 2:6. The Holy Spirit will continue to operate on earth during the seven years opening of the next age, disseminating blessing on all who will believe; but wreaking out vengeance on those that will not repent and believe.

"And before the throne was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind" - 4:6 Greek. We read of "a molten sea" before Solomon's temple, which corresponded with the laver made by Moses - I Kings 7:23. Spiritually, it is

called "the laver of regeneration" - Titus 3:5 Revised Version. The "sea of glass" expresses the cleansing absolutely necessary to come into God's Presence. The elders will have obtained that cleansing. The "living creatures" (not beasts) figure a company of full overcomers who possess the characteristics here named. In Ezekiel one, they are seen on earth. Here they are seen in Heaven. They occupy the closest and most intimate place with Christ, and will always have that place. John saw them in the throne and round about it. They have full vision of Divine things, having "eyes before," "behind," and "within." They understand Divine history and prophecy, the Old Testament and the New, and discern deep Christian experiences. They reach the acme of spiritual wisdom and understanding. "He that is spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man" - I Corinthians 2:15.

A fourfold portrait is given of them:

The "lion" phase denotes strength and courage. "The righteous are bold as a lion" - Proverbs 28:1.

The "calf" phase speaks of sacrifice, suffering, and service. "The ox that treadeth out the corn" - I Timothy 5:18.

The "face as a man" proves that the living creatures are human beings, and not disembodied seraphs or unfallen angels or some mysterious super sublime creatures connected with the government of God.

The "flying eagle" phase denotes their heavenly spiritual nature and activities. They are partakers of Christ. He is their life - Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:4. "The way of an eagle in the air" is wonderful - Proverbs 30:19. The translation of the saints also will be wonderful. The Lord says, "I am the Living One" - 1:18 Revised Version. And here are "four living ones."

Our Lord possessed the above four traits of character, which are pictured in the four Gospel records. He is "the Lion of the tribe of Juda," described by Matthew. As the Ox of sacrifice and service, He is seen in Mark. Luke portrays Him as "the Son of Man." John sets Him forth as the Eagle, the heavenly Divine One.

THEIR DEPORTMENT IN HEAVEN

"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, "saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" - 4:8. Six wings suggest the complete Divine equipment to bear God's message, whether of mercy or of judgment. That number is the creature witness (two) multiplied by the Divine number of Deity (three). Everyone has six wings, making twenty-four in all - a correspondence with the number of elders that minister with them.

These saints execute God's will perfectly on earth, walking in all the light He gives them; for they have full understanding of His things, being "full of eyes within." They will continue their spiritual activities in Heaven, the first and chief one being worship. On earth, they laud and adore the God of creation and redemption. Compare John 4:23. Overcomers render service gladly; but worship must come first and prepare for service. Few saints learn this great secret. The living ones exclaim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," falling down with the elders before Him. In chapter four, they worship the Lord as the Creator. In chapter five, they worship Him as the Redeemer.

So we should do now. Those elders and living ones are not two groups of believers, but two phases of one group. The three closing verses of this chapter indicate that the living ones lead in worship and the elders join with them. We shall see later their united and separate performances in the glory.

THE LAMB FOUND WORTHY

Chapter Five

"And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals" - 5: 1. John is still in Heaven in his spirit. The three Persons of Deity are in view here. This speaks especially of redemption. The book sealed was a scroll. The "things which must be hereafter" are the contents of the book, which were presently cast upon the vision screen (4:1). In chapter six, we read of the opening of six of the seven seals and the disclosure of their contents. The opening of the seventh seal is found in 8:1. The "strong angel" is, doubtless, one of the elders. We should not expect John actually to have those experiences in Heaven. He had them in vision only; but the sterling facts will occur. The Lamb of redemption will actually open the seals.

Jesus Christ purchased the authority to reign as "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David" by the fact that He was "the Lamb slain" - 5:5, 6; 13:8. Hence, Judah's Lion will have the power and David's Lord will have the right, to bring to pass the events herein recorded. Israel nationally rejected "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" at His first advent, even as Joseph's brothers rejected him at first. But, at the beginning of the next age, Judah's Lion will be crowned on David's throne by having been "the Lamb slain." He wore a crown of thorns once; but He is destined to wear a crown of royalty and glory

forever. The contrast is the greater because the Greek word for "lamb" is not "amnon" as in John 1:29, but "amion" a little lamb or lambkin. The smallest weakest creature, the despised and rejected of men, the helpless, lonely, bruised and slain One, shall be exalted to sit in Heaven "King of saints (ages)" - Revelation 15:3. He shall judge the world and save Israel.

"And when He had taken the book, the four beasts (living creatures) and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors (incense), which are the prayers of saints" - 5:8. The company figured by these will be the first perfected ripened fruits of redemption of this age. They are seen first in Heaven. They will share jointly with the Lamb in fulfilling God's will in the opening acts of the Millennial Age. Therefore, they must be in Heaven, to witness the declaration of the worthiness of Jesus Christ to take in hand the government of the heavens and of the earth. As the Apostle John was called to Heaven in spirit to see those events mirrored, so the full overcomers will be summoned thither by the same voice of command to participate actually in that sublime drama. The relation of the Deity and the humanity of Jesus and the union of the living ones and elders with Him, as expressed in chapters four and five, are exceedingly intricate and interesting. As worshipers, the overcomers are pictured as living creatures in the midst of the throne. As rulers, they are termed elders sitting on thrones around the great throne.

Who are the living creatures and elders? Our foregoing remarks anticipated the answer. They fall down together before the throne. Each one has a harp, a symbol of praise. Each one has a golden bowl, a symbol of petition. Incense is in every bowl - prayer was their chief ministry on earth. Praise will be their sublime activity in Heaven. They sing in unison "a new song." All are subjects of redemption, for they exclaim, "Thou... hast redeemed US ... and hast made US unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign over the earth." At least eight things are said of all of them, and these eight facts prove them to be redeemed and glorified human beings. Every other mention of them, in other chapters, confirms these proofs.

REPRESENTATIVE NUMBERS

Be it not supposed that there will be only four living creatures and twenty-four elders in Heaven; neither will there be such a distinction as living ones and elders. Rather, they are representative numbers, and together figure one important group in the heavenly program. There are four because they possess the four pronounced traits of their Head, Christ, to whom they are so vitally joined; also, from the four points of the compass. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" - I Corinthians 6:17. As elders, there are twenty-four, because they figure the full official authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" over the universe for a thousand years.

Their actual number is indicated by one statement in Ezekiel 1:24. He says, "I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the Voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host." They will be a host indeed, a glorious host.

They sing of themselves - "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" - 5:9. Count the nations and languages, and you will think of the "ten thousands of His holy ones" - Jude 14. "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife," the central figure of "the holy city," suggests the immense size of that company - 21:2, 9. The words of "the daughters" convey the same thought - "What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies" - Song of Solomon 6:9, 13.

As Adam's dominion over the beasts did not begin till his wife was with him, so Jesus Christ must have His Bride-elect with Him when His dominion begins. We say Bride-elect, for the wedding will take place about six years later - Revelation 19. The four living ones and twenty-four elders are not two distinct companies. They are one united group, but in the vision they appear to minister as two. As priests, they all worship God. As kings, they all reign with Jesus. As priests, all of them are "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne." As kings, all wear "crowns of gold" and reign.

A critical Bible teacher may quote 5:9, 10 in the Revised Version, and object to our interpretation. That reads as if those living ones and elders sang about other people instead of themselves - that Christ redeemed others and made them kings and priests and they should reign, and not the singers. We have no quarrel with the Revised Version, for it includes the singers as well as those sung about. It is a very common thing for folk to speak of Christians or believers in a general way as of absent parties, and yet all the while consider themselves included. Were not those singers redeemed? Will not all the saved ones reign with Christ in some measure, in some capacity? My little toes share in the dominion exercised by my head.

Furthermore, it is objected that "us" is not in the Greek. Let the reader observe the many italicized words in the Bible, which means that they are not in the original; hence, translators supply them. For example: "It" in

1: 1, 11 and "is" in verse three twice, and "be" in verse six, and "one" in verse thirteen are very important words. The wording of 5:10 is very similar to 1:6. Men unwisely insert words often. For example, the definite article "the" is not in the Greek in 1:10 - "in the Spirit." It should read, "in spirit."

The worship of God is the most supreme activity of saints on earth, and it will be so throughout eternity. As pertaining to the Lamb of God Himself, the full over-comers shout, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" - 4:8. But, as regards His relation to Israel and the earth, they exclaim, "Holy! holy! holy! Lord of hosts: His glory is the fullness of the whole earth" - Isaiah 6:3. Jesus said that the Father seeks men to worship Him - John 4:23. The word "worship" occurs ten times in that narrative. That company of priests and kings, worshipers and rulers, shall have the most responsible place with Jesus Christ in judging the world and in establishing peace on earth. They are now in training for that honored service by learning to worship God and by reigning "in life by One, Jesus Christ," through the "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness" - Romans 5:17. They judge the world now, even as Noah condemned the world by building the ark. By faith, their feet are on the necks of their enemies. See I Corinthians 6:1, 3. The particular ministry of the full overcomers during the first seven years of the Millennium is expressed in Revelation 6:1-7; 8:2; 11:16-18; 15:7; 17:1. Study these citations and see.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" - at least 100,000,000 - 5:11. The four closing verses of chapter five are freighted with sublime majesty. All creation must acknowledge the holiness and faithfulness of God and the Lamb, in respect to creation and redemption, before the seals may be opened and the judgments begin. Gentile times will end when Christ takes the throne, and Jewish times will begin. From the commencement of the week of seven years, Gentile rulers will be usurpers. Their refusal to yield to the dictatorship of God's Son, and the Jews' refusal of His Messiahship, will occasion the tribulation days. Jesus must fight for possession of His right to reign. If the world rulers were not usurpers then how could the Lord judge the world and nations justly? With the beginning of Christ's reign, Isaiah 45:20-25 and Philippians 2:9-11 will be fulfilled. Hence, the Jews and Gentiles and the professed church will all be out of Divine order. "At the Name of Jesus every knee should bow." The clause, "we shall reign ON the earth" (Rev. 5:10) is explained by Luke 1:32, 33 - "And He (Jesus) shall reign OVER the house of Jacob." The preposition "epi", translated "on", means "upon" and "over." We shall reign with Christ in Heaven, and from Heaven reign with Him OVER the earth. The inhabitants of the earth will be subject to Christ and to the saints as one with Him.

THE SEALS OPENED

Chapter Six

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the living ones saying as it were the noise of thunder, Come" - 6:1 Greek. This chapter is an index to the remainder of the book. It's amazing language is symbolic. Four prevailing conditions are mentioned. The words "and see" are not in the best manuscripts. The four riders are not bidden to come and see, but to come and perform their parts in the drama.

THE FIRST SEAL

The rider on the white horse betokens peace and prosperity. We look for a national proclamation of "peace and safety," including a covenant with the Jews for seven years. The conqueror has a bow but no arrows, indicating conquest without blood. He will be diplomatic and rule by moral suasion. He will hold a promise bow rather than a battle bow. Later, a crown will be given to him, indicating authority. That period will likely embrace the seven-headed league of nations - Revelation 13. That time is near at hand.

THE SECOND SEAL

The red horse speaks of war. His rider will have a sword and authority to kill his fellows. He will interfere with the peace league. That time will be the fulfillment of I Thessalonians 5:3 - "For when they (the nations) shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." One or more of the nations that sign the peace league will rise up and break it. That will lead on to the final contest, the battle of Armageddon. The "seven kings" will be evidently the heads of the peace league - 17:10. One of them probably will be "the beast that thou sawest was, and is not," and the anti-Christ - 17:8. He will be one of the six that goes down at the time of the red horse period 17:10. He will come up from the pit, "continue a short space" - "forty-two months" (17:10; 13:5) - and land in the lake of fire with the false prophet, the second beast - 19:20.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH SEALS

The black and pale horses prefigure the inevitable results of war - hunger, famine, poverty, death, destruction, and paralysis of every industry in the world. The present equipments for warfare are so complete and proficient that the nations will wipe one another off the map if God does not intervene. Jesus Christ foretold that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" - Matthew 24:22. The events under the seals are expressed by symbols. Though the seals are opened one after the other, yet their contents do not actually occur in uniform succession. The first four seals cover the entire tribulation period.

The fifth seal, doubtless, begins under the second. The sixth seal occurs at the end of the fourth.

Revelation 6:12-17 seems to agree with Matthew 24:29 - "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be, darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." The seventh seal records the terrible happenings of the second, third, and fourth seals somewhat in detail. Note the eighth and ninth chapters.

The final rejection of Jesus Christ by the world will be in the same order as was His former rejection by the Jews. Matthew records His rejection as the promised King. Therefore, the first living one, a figure of the lion-like overcomers, summons the first horse and his rider. The saints will have kingly authority with the "King of kings."

Mark records His rejection as the sacrificial One, the sin offering. He "made peace through the blood of His Cross" - Colossians 1:20. How fitting then that the ox-like overcomer should call forth the red horse, whose rider will "take peace from the earth" - 6:4. These facts are indeed marvelous.

Luke declares Jesus to be the peace offering. "On earth peace, good will toward men," the angels declared - Luke 2:14. He "came and preached peace" - Ephesians 2:17. But the Jews refused to hear Him. Plenty follows peace; but famine follows war. A great dearth came in all the land after Jesus was crucified. It will come again in unspeakable measure. The third living creature, having it a face as a man," will call forth the black horse. The "parousia," or Presence of Christ from Heaven, will result in devastation and death because He will be due to reign and the world will refuse His dominion. Finally, John wrote of Jesus as the heavenly One, the Son of God, who was crucified. The hatred of the Jews culminated in killing Him. Likewise, the pale horse expresses the culmination of man's hatred of Christ. The eagle-like overcomer fittingly calls out the pale horse. Because "the Prince of Life" will be blasphemed, He will send His quartet of wrath - "to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth" (the rulers, national and religious, are those beasts - Rev. 13).

THE FIFTH SEAL

"And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held" - 6:9. These are not the martyrs of the dark ages. Their "fellow servants" and "brethren" will not worship "the beast, neither his image," nor receive "his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands" - 6:11; 20:4. They will be slain during the earlier part of the reign of anti-Christ. They are not part of the great multitude of chapter seven.

The scope of this seal, doubtless, includes those in 15:2, 3 and 20:4. The phrase "under the altar" is figurative of possessing a lesser place than in the Church or Body of Christ. The original title translated "Lord" is "Despot." They will exclaim, "O Despot, the holy and the true" - 6:10. The same term occurs in Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; II Peter 2:1; Jude 4. Its use in every case expresses deep feeling, and usually in exclamation, even as here. They will cry for retribution, like the imprecatory Psalms; for example, Psalm 6:10. The dominion of Jesus Christ will be with the despotism of love, righteousness, and peace. The conscious existence of souls in Heaven ought to prevent the error of so-called "soul sleeping." Those souls will not be in the grave, but in Heaven. If they should be asleep in the tomb, how could they cry "with a loud voice," or be comforted with "white robes," and told to "rest yet for a little season"? Paul never taught that foolish theory. He had "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" than staying on earth - Philippians 1:23, 24. Compare also II Corinthians 5:6-9.

THE SIXTH SEAL

"And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind" - 6:12, 13.

The remaining verses of this chapter describe the terrible results of God's accumulated fury poured out upon a rebellious world. No one will escape His wrath. The great and the small will be companions in the rocks and mountains, as they seek to hide from God. The events recorded under the sixth seal take us to

the very end of the tribulation period, and the battle of Armageddon. (This paragraph is by the Editor).

HALLELUJAH TO THE LAMB!

Mary M. Bodie

Worthy, worthy is the Lamb once slain,
Praise Him! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Bless His Name!
Praise and spread abroad His fame,
Hallelujah to the Lamb!
He redeemed us from an awful fall,
Praise Him! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Bless His Name!
Praise Him, ye His creatures all,
Hallelujah to the Lamb!
He has made us kings and priests unto God,
Praise Him! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Bless His Name!
Praise and own Him as thy Lord,
Hallelujah to the Lamb!
We shall reign with Him eternally,
Praise Him! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Bless His Name!
Praise the Man of Calvary,
Hallelujah to the Lamb!

PARENTHETICAL PORTRAITS

Chapter Seven

In the preceding chapter, the apostle beheld the sad events of the opening of the Millennial Age as they will take place. However, it was impossible to record them precisely so, because sometimes two or more happenings occurred at the same moment. Therefore, there are overlappings. A going back several times is necessary. Also, the same facts are sometimes expressed in different ways, or by different figures. Some form a parenthesis, for example - Revelation 7:1-8. Here we have the sealing of 144,000. "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree" - 7: 1. This portion will be fulfilled before the middle of the seven eventful years. John does not say, "After these things, the events of chapter seven happened"; but, "After these things I saw." After he saw the contents of chapter six, he beheld other things. Chapter six outlines what he saw in detail later. Who are the "four angels"? They are God's people, who hold with Him by faith that His perfect will be done. They are termed that which "withholdeth" or "hindereth" - II Thess. 2:6, 7

What are "the four winds"? They are wicked spirits in the heavenlies" - Ephesians 6:12. Two of them are called "the prince of Persia" and "the prince of Grecia" - Daniel 10:13, 20. Satan is named "the prince of this world" - John 12:31; 14:30. Also, "the prince of the power of the air" -

Ephesians 2:2. "The four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea" - Daniel 7:2. That is, evil spirits did the behest of the devil in moving the nations to overthrow their neighbors. The national map of the world has a corresponding map in the heavens. Compare Revelation 12:3 and 13:1 and Ephesians 6:12. Jesus did not deny it, when Satan claimed to have power over the nations - Matthew 4:8, 9. Doubtless, "the four winds" dominated the four Gentile world powers of Daniel seven, and will dominate the revived Roman Empire.

After the closing days of this (Gentile) age, "that man of sin" or lawless one - the anti-Christ - will be revealed and reign for forty-two months - 13:5. Under his cruel despotism, unspeakable damage will be done to "the earth" (also representing the Jews), to "the sea" (Gentiles), and to "the trees" (earth-dwelling saints) - 12:17; Psalm 104:16; Isaiah 55:12. Evidently, Satan would have had this man in power long ago, if God had not restrained him in answer to the cries of the saints. Perhaps he attempted to do it in times past during the world wars. But the saints hold back "the rulers of the darkness of this world," or evil spirits. After

the 144,000 of "the servants of our God" will be sealed and caught away to Heaven (Rev. 14), the anti-Christ will be enthroned on earth - Rev. 13. Note that the sealed ones are "of all the tribes of the Children of Israel" - 7:4.

They will be "sealed" with the Holy Spirit - Ephesians 5:18 and 4:30 with John 6:27 - that is, filled or anointed with the Spirit.

That sealing evidently began with the anointing of the twelve apostles (Acts 2), the earnest of those to be sealed in the beginning of the next age; for the first seven years of this present dispensation were an earnest of the Millennium. They were the last seven years of Daniel's seventy decreed or determined weeks of blessing upon Israel - Daniel 9:24.

Who are "the wise virgins" (Matthew 25), but the 144,000 (Rev. 14:4)? Those sealed at the beginning "went forth to meet the Bridegroom." But He has "tarried" for these nearly two thousand years, or two prophetic days - II Peter 3:8. They will be present at the marriage of the Lamb, as friends of the Bride and of the Bridegroom - 14:4; Psalm 45:14. Perhaps the end-time portion of this company are being sealed before our eyes today, even as Ephesian saints are being "sealed unto the day of redemption" - Ephesians 4:30. The 144,000 are by no means the Bride company, even as the wise virgins at the oriental wedding were not the bride. That scene about the 144,000 in John's vision was on earth. We will see the same group again, but the next time in Heaven - Revelation 14. The remainder of Revelation seven records a scene in Heaven.

Revelation 7:9-17 - "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred's, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" - 7:9. This vast crowd is erroneously called "the tribulation saints," because some folk suppose that they will be saved during the tribulation period. We must distinguish between the unspeakably "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21 and the "great tribulation" of Revelation 7:14. This is termed "the hour of temptation (trial), which shall come upon all the world" - 3:10. That of Matthew twenty-four refers only to the final trouble coming upon the Jews, not upon all the world. That will be localized in Palestine and occur after the middle of the week of seven years. It is called "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), and "the indignation" - Isaiah 26:20.

This description of the innumerable company is a scene in Heaven. Two things are mentioned as having happened to them on earth. Two other things are implied. But twelve facts are named concerning them that shall occur in Heaven. These constitute the vast multitudes that have believed on Jesus Christ throughout this Church Age, except the Smyrna overcomers. The many believers who will live for translation, except the Philadelphia overcomers, are also included. It is unreasonable and unscriptural to suppose that they will be saved within the seven years of tribulation. If that were true, then more folk will be saved in seven years than throughout the past two thousand years. That view contradicts the five-time repeated statement - "They repented not" - 2:21; 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11. If that be true, where shall we look for the myriads in Heaven that were saved during the past twenty centuries? Instead of being saved during the tribulation days, we read that they "came out" of that time - 7:14.

By such an interpretation, the four living ones and twenty-four elders are made to represent all that will be raised and translated; for they are the only saints seen in Heaven up to that point. That is improbable - first because they are a comparatively small group; and second because they figure only the highest rank of believers. The description of them proves this last fact. Not one citation in the book intimates that they will be saved during the tribulation period, nor that there will be a translation after the days of tribulation. Jesus said in plain words, "He that shall endure unto the end (of the tribulation days), the same shall be saved (from physical death)" - Matthew 24:13. See also Revelation 2:25, 26; 12:14. Even the victors over the beast are not of the Church; for "they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" - 15:3. None saved after Jesus Christ will have been enthroned will be counted in the Church or the Body of Christ. That will be Kingdom time entirely. Of course, "the everlasting Gospel" proclaimed by the flying angel will move some to believe on Jesus; but they will not be translated to Heaven.

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

The living creatures and the elders represent a particular order or rank of believers. They are not a small company in reality. See Revelation 5:9. The blameless Smyrnians and the commended Philadelphians are in this rank. The innumerable company are in the second rank. The time of their appearance in Heaven and their lesser characteristics indicate this fact. Note twelve clear points of difference:

The living ones and elders will arrive in Heaven BEFORE Christ will be enthroned - 4:1. The innumerable company will arrive there AFTER He is enthroned. The former will be kept from or out of the hour of trial or great tribulation - 3:10. That is termed "the tribulation, the great one" in distinction from many tribulations of

the saints during this age. It will embrace the "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21. The first rank or living ones are seen "in the midst of the throne" or sit on thrones around the great throne. The second rank or countless company are seen standing "before the throne"; hence, they form an outer circle. The first "fall down ... and worship" - 4:10. The second cry, "Salvation to our God" - 7:10. The first have it on their heads crowns of gold" - 4:4. The second have "palms in their hands" - 7:9. The first acknowledge that they were "made ... kings and priests" unto God - 5:10. The second "serve Him day and night" - 7:15.

The first rank, the living ones and elders, lead in the worship of God. They will be employed also in specific ministries associated with Christ, because they enjoy such ministries on earth. For example, they will announce the results of the opening of the seals. They are the seven angels that sound the seven trumpets - Revelation 8. They hold the golden bowls containing the seven last plagues - Revelation 15, 16. Nothing more is said after the seventh chapter about the innumerable company till at the wedding where they are called "servants" - 19:5. The elders and living creatures are mentioned again and again, and the last time in 19:4 and there as worshipers.

Other lords have long held sway.
Now, Thy Name alone to bear.
Thy dear Voice alone obey,
Is my daily, hourly prayer.
"Whom have I in Heaven but Thee?"
Nothing else my joy can be.

JUDGMENT PROCLAIMED

Chapter Eight

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them was given seven trumpets" - 8:1, 2. This marks a vital change in the Divine panorama. The first five chapters and chapter seven are preparatory. The sixth chapter is an epitome of what follows. The company represented by the four living ones and twenty-four elders will be in Heaven before chapter eight will begin to be fulfilled. "Silence in Heaven." Have you observed what a solemn calm and stillness precedes a dreadful thunderstorm? The atmosphere is sultry and oppressive. The ensuing tempest purifies the atmosphere. Then follows a gladdening calm. The birds sing sweetly, the sun shines brightly, vegetation sparkles, men rejoice.

Just so with the beginning of the next age. The full overcomers will be absent, having been translated. The religious atmosphere will be exceedingly foul, Laodiceanism being the prevailing condition. A form of godliness without Divine power is unbearably oppressive. The world, though religious, will reject the simple Gospel of faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the holy Jehovah will proceed to purify it with fiery judgments. The vengeance of an offended God and of a rejected Redeemer will awe all Heaven into profound solemn silence. The "half an hour" is not literally thirty minutes but simply a brief time, possibly a few months. This age is called an hour; likewise, is the Millennial Age - John 5:25, 28. The time of the great Divine indignation is termed "the hour of His judgment" - 14:7.

"The seven angels," mentioned here and in chapter fifteen, are not disembodied or "ministering spirits"; but they are redeemed human spirits with glorified bodies - Matthew 4:11; Hebrews 1:6, 14. Angels are never to be judges; but, instead, "the saints shall judge the world ... we shall judge angels" - I Corinthians 6:2, 3. Furthermore, angels never serve as priests at an altar. They cannot know anything about sacrifice. Only the Redeemer and the redeemed can understand priestly service. He has "made us unto our God kings and priests" - 5:10. Angels as servants of God during this age minister comfort, protection, and deliverance to saints; but saints only as one with Christ, as "holy brethren" in fellowship with Him, enjoy the priestly and kingly offices with Him.

Hence, we read in Hebrews 2:5 - "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come," because during the Millennium man in the Person of Christ will reign supreme. God has "put all things in subjection under His feet" - Hebrews 2:8.

The "another Angel" is none other than our blessed Lord - 8:3. Only Aaron, the high priest, could offer the incense in the Mosaic tabernacle. Jesus Christ, our "great High Priest," is the anti-Type of Aaron - Hebrews 4:14. Likewise, He is the "Altar" in Heaven, even as in Him "we have an Altar" now - Hebrews 13:10. There is no discrepancy between Revelation 8:3 and 5:8 which declares that the incense is "the prayers of saints."

Isaiah 6:6, 7 is a sidelight. David cried, "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense" - Psalm 141:2. The prayers of Jesus also are incense before the Father, and they are here mingled with the petitions of the saints.

JUDGMENT PRAYERS ANSWERED

These are not the ordinary nor extraordinary entreaties of all saints generally. The great petition on the heart of Jesus Christ, and which He also taught His disciples, is the particular request here - "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven" - Matthew 6:10. This agrees wonderfully with David's petition which he desired should be directed as incense - "Let not an evil speaker, a man of violence, be established in the earth: let him be hunted to his overthrow," - Psalm 140:11 margin. David prayed by "the Spirit of Christ" which was in him - I Peter 1:11. Of course, that petition will be answered; for, that "man of violence" is "that man of sin," of whom Paul wrote - II Thessalonians 2:3. That, the Kingdom of God should come and His will be done perfectly in the earth through the reign of His Son over the nations is the essential prayer that fills the golden bowl of incense, and which Jesus shall offer with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar.

"And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" - 8:4. That is, the united cries of Jesus and of His holy ones for the establishing of the kingdom by the necessary judgments of Israel and of the world and by the return of Him whose right it is to reign are accepted by the righteous Judge. Those cries will be answered speedily. While these very saints are in, the world, they judge it by living in full sympathy with Jesus in all His operations and in His future purposes and hopes. They offer mercy to men, but warn them of those very judgments if they spurn mercy. They pray for the salvation of the people, but especially long for the Lord to hasten His coming. The "fire of the altar" is God's answer to prayer in judgment upon those who reject the judgment that fell upon Christ on Calvary. The "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake" are the warnings of Jehovah which immediately precede the judgments, just as rolling thunders and dazzling lightnings go before a terrific wind and rain storm. "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" - Romans 11:33.

THE SEVEN ANGELS SOUND

"And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound" - 8:6. We must not confound this sounding of trumpets with the sounding of "the trump of God" in I Corinthians 15:52 and I Thessalonians 4:16. That will be the trumpet of resurrection and translation, the Voice of the Lord, summoning the redeemed to glory. These seven messengers represent those redeemed ones in Heaven announcing the judgments which will then fall upon the world. God's faithful ones must be in Heaven before He can punish the inhabitants of the earth.

The judgments announced by the four trumpet angels of chapter eight will be fulfilled from above. That shows that God is over all and has charge of all. Those visitations will be the instruments of His correction or punishment. They begin to be recorded in this chapter. The three woes, the utterances of the last three angels, indicate that wicked men inspired by Satan will be the agents of trouble and disorder. The woes begin to be described in chapter nine. The "sorrows" of chapter eight and the "woes" of chapter nine culminate in the "bowls of wrath" of chapters sixteen to eighteen.

"The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up" - 8:7. Doubtless, some nation will disturb the "peace and safety" by hurling destructive elements through the air upon Jerusalem. That will be the beginning of "the hour of His judgment" which will grow worse and worse and climax in the battle of Armageddon, and be ended by the revelation of Christ. Most likely the development and enlargement of that trouble is described by the next angel. "The earth" (8:7) refers to Palestine as distinguished from "the sea" (8:8) which refers to the nations. Compare 13:11 with 13:1.

"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood" - 8:8. That great mountain is Palestine flaming with national envy and greed, which will make a plunge against the seven-headed empire. Thus "the third part of the sea," a great portion of the world, will again be engaged in war which will culminate in the battle of Armageddon.

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters" - 8:10. Evidently this star is the same star of 9:1; that is, the devil. Here John sees him falling; there he is "fallen" - Revised Version. As in chapter nine, he has authority (the key of the pit) and national power; "burning as it were a lamp," in contrast with

Jesus "the light of the world." Paul declares that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" - II Cor. 11:14. Through false prophets, the devil will embitter "the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters"; that is, poison the minds of religious bodies of people, who "received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved" - II Thess. 2:10. That will lead up to the full development of the ministry of the second beast, the false prophet (13:11-18), by whom "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" - II Thessalonians 2:11.

"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise" - 8:12. Of course, the sun and moon will be darkened. The smoke of battle always obscures the light. Chapter eight will begin to be fulfilled some time before the woe period of chapter nine commences. The reason for this will be made plain in the notes on 17:8-11. The "peace and safety" period (the white horse of chapter six) will be brief comparatively. As Michael will fight Satan to cast him out to make room for the saints in Heaven (which probably will begin with the ascension of the full overcomers), the devil will seek revenge by causing some nation to arise against the Jews and destroy them.

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" - 8:13. This last verse of chapter eight is in fact the introduction of chapter nine. The Revised Version says "an eagle" was what John saw. This is correct, no doubt. That messenger, like "the eagle that hasteth to the prey" (Job 9:26), will be moved by Divine indignation to go quickly and announce the three woes. It will not be our Lord, but some unflinching herald of His who will declare the rapid increase of the Divine judgments.

The Lord may cause some of His servants to travel miraculously through the air in that day, even as He did Philip - Acts 8:39.

SUDDENLY

Emeline Porter Buswell

Quiet the dusk of the evening,
Softly the sheep in the fold
Slept in dim firelight gleaming,
Still was the starlight and cold.
Cities and empires were quiet;
Peace closed Rome's temple doors.
Men spoke the tongue of the Grecian,
Rome's highways traversed all shores.
Sin, black - for long years it had been.
Nothing was startling or new -
Suddenly Heaven was riven,
And angels thronged into earth's view!
Angels, proclaiming the coming
Of the long-promised Saviour and King:
"Glory to God in the highest!"
Angels and archangels sing.
Long have I pondered that Advent -
Thought of that age and that clime.
Suddenly! All cataclysmic!
Shattered by Infant sublime!
And I think of the promise He left us,
"Again I will come! Suddenly!"
"And, breathlessly thrilled at that prospect,
I look for that Advent to be!
Not in still midnight, to shepherd,
Cometh our glorious King!
But suddenly, all eyes beholding,
Myriads of saints praises sing!
And some will rejoice at His beauty,

While others will wail at His scars!
And they who have loved Him, forever
Shall shine with the radiance of stars.

THE THREE AWFUL WOES

Chapter Nine

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth" - 9:1. This is an important point. Here we are 250 days before the middle of the week, or two years and nine months and twenty days (1010 days) from its commencement. This is the beginning of the first woe, which continues exactly five months or 150 days - 9:5. The second woe covers one hundred days, ending with the ascension of the two witnesses - 11:13, 14. Thus the third woe will occupy the time of "that man of sin" reigning as God; that is, three and one-half years. This star is Satan himself, called "Lucifer (or day star), son of the morning," whom Isaiah saw cast down - Isaiah 14:12-15. Jesus saw "Satan as lightning fall from heaven" - Luke 10:18. This is the "great red dragon" cast down from heaven - 12:3, 9. He is in contrast with "the bright and morning Star" of 22:16.

THE PIT OF THE ABYSS

In the Old Testament the home of the departed spirits, whether saved or unsaved, is expressed by the word "hell" (Sheol, Hebrew) a very deep place down in the earth - Job 11:8. It is called also "the nether parts of the earth" - Ezekiel 31:16. The wicked dead are in "lowest hell," or "Sheol" - Deut. 32:22; Psalm 86:13. The Hebrew for "pit" in Numbers 16:30, 33 is "Sheol." In the New Testament, the abode of departed spirits is expressed by the word "hell" (hades, Greek) - Matthew 11:23; gehenna - Matthew 5:22; tartarus - II Peter 2:4; "lower parts of the earth" - Ephesians 4:9; "prison" - I Peter 3:19; "the deep" (abussos, abyss, Greek) - Luke 8:31; Romans 10:7; "bottomless pit" (abussos, abyss, Greek) - Rev. 9:2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3.

"The pit of the abyss" (phreatos tes abussou, Greek) occurs only in Revelation 9:1 in the Revised Version. The abode of the saved departed spirits is expressed also by the words "Abraham's bosom" and "paradise" - Luke 16:22; 23:43. All the above words or expressions except "gehenna" refer to the homes of the departed from the beginning until Christ was raised from the dead. Gehenna refers to, "the lake of fire," the abode of the devil and the wicked after the Millennium - Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15.

The Greek word "phrear," translated "pit" in Revelation 9:1, 2, is translated "pit" in Luke 14:5 and "well" in John 4:11, 12. The latter citation indicates that it expresses "depth." It is defined in the Greek as "a pit, a dungeon, a well, a deep dark channel, or cavern." Its use in the Old Testament conveys the same meanings. Doubtless, "the pit" in connection with the abyss" (Rev. 9:1) means the aperture or shaft that leads down to the pit. The Greek word "abussos," as an adjective, means "enormous, unfathomed." Though "the abyss" was the great habitation of all the dead before Jesus came; yet, since Jesus arose from the grave, it is inhabited only by the wicked dead. The righteous were "afar off" from the wicked, separated by "a great gulf fixed" - Luke 16:23, 26. But Jesus Christ depopulated upper hades, or Sheol, the upper part of the abyss -

Ephesians 4:8-10 with I Peter 3:19. The believing dead were not in a place of darkness. Romans 10:7 suggests this - "Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)" Compare I Peter 3:19 - "By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

Jesus went to the "prisoners of hope" in "Abraham's bosom," for they had died in the faith; and He led them out and took them to Heaven when He ascended on high. Our Lord has "the keys of hell (hades,) and of death"; that is, authority and power over the dead. At the time of which John wrote, He will allow Satan to open the pit and bring up many of its inhabitants; for demons dwell there as well as lost souls - Luke 8:31.

Satan is "the prince," "the god of this world" - John 12:31; II Cor. 4:4. This office was given him before he fell. Jesus Christ, "the Prince of life," took it from him provisionally at Calvary - "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil" - Hebrews 2:14. By "the brightness of His coming" our Lord will actually annul all of Satan's power and hurl him down into the very pit which, three and a half years before, Satan will have had the power to unlock - 20:1-3. "The Prince of life" will overthrow the prince of death. The dominion which the latter lost through ignominious pride and self-will, the former gains through true humility and a submissive will to the Father. Reader, with which one are you allied?

THE FIRST WOE

The locusts which come out of the smoke are demons come up from hell. These will possess and empower wicked men, filling them with satanic hate. At no time could men continue to fight and shed the blood of their

fellows with pleasure, if they were not supernaturally endowed with the devil. It has been dreadful enough in the past. But, oh, how terrible it will be in the beginning of the next age when Satan himself with his organized forces of heaven will fall unto the earth and his demon hordes will come up from the abyss; and with all their accumulated wisdom and power will possess the nations and they will fight one another as never before. God will protect His own people, seen in the vision as grass, green, things, and trees. For five months the locusts will be allowed to torment unbelievers, but not kill them.

The first woe of one hundred and fifty days will be a preparatory period for more troubles. Armies will be organizing. Local wars and rumors of wars will so alarm the people that many will seek death in vain. The boasted peace and safety league will be broken forever. One man, filled and controlled by the devil, will have supremacy. Joel had foretold of this great locust-like horde, terming them caterpillars, palmerworms, cankerworms, and locusts. Those nations were used of the Lord to chastise the Jews; hence, called "His army," a very great camp - Joel 2:11. But He will afterward take vengeance upon those nations. See Zechariah 14:3.

"They have over them as king, the angel of the abyss, his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he hath the name Apollyon" - 9:11 Revised Version. The Hebrew word means "destruction," and the Greek word means "destroyer." Satan himself is that king. He will come down to the earth as the Jews' - "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" - I Peter 5:8. He is the "star ... from heaven" named in 9:1.

THE SECOND WOE

"One woe is past, and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter" - 9:12.

The first and second woes complement each other. The first is preparatory - "prepared unto battle" - 9:7. The second suggests the conflict begun. The language describing those armies indicates that they are the same company. While in preparation for war, they torment men five months. "In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it" - 9:5, 6, 10. Fore-running skirmishes and the horrors of war will be to many as scorpion stings. Many families, whose sons will be summoned to battle, with breaking hearts will seek to die. The past wars have been so unspeakably devilish that most of the surviving soldiers long to forget them by refusing to speak of them. The forebodings of a future world war are so fearful that they are as scorpion stings. The next one will be incomparably worse. How foolish of believers to insist that we must be here and pass through the tribulation period. Why not believe Revelation 3:10 - "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."

"And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates" - 9:13, 14. Those four angels are called "four winds" (7:1), which means four nation-ruling evil spirits or princes - Daniel 10:20, 21. As the angel Michael was a good spirit prince doing God's will, so there are evil spirit princes which serve Satan. Since the devil is "the god of this world," he controls the rulers of the nations through his angel princes.

Evidently, four national powers beyond the Euphrates will couch lionlike; and, when the Divine restraint is removed, they will rush in upon the holy land. After Satan is cast down, he will bring up from the pit his demon hordes by whom he will inflame a great company from the East. The number which John saw - 200,000,000 - is a small part of the present population of the globe. No matter what mischievous purpose men may conceive against God's people, they cannot move except as He allows them - Ezekiel 34:10. Read for comfort Deuteronomy 32:8, 9. That mighty eastern army will open fire on a certain previously determined hour (God sets the time) of a certain day of a certain month of a certain year - literally, "an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year" - 9:15. "And thus I saw the horses in the vision." John marveled at the striking appearance of the horses. Note 9:7-10, 17. Their description together with the "fire and smoke and brimstone ... which issued out of their mouths" suggests that they will be the most deadly war weapons that devil-inspired men can make. The battle tanks of the present great conflict, belching from both ends like volcanoes death-dealing shot mingled with liquid fire, are an earnest of what is coming. In the air, on the waters, and on the land, many kinds of instruments of offense and defense are being used by all the nations. Millions of dollars are spent on national and international destruction. John emphasizes three elements of quick devastation. He says, "By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths" - 9:18. The phrase "the third part of men" means the third of the world's population, no doubt. That number today is 670,666,666 (note the repetition of the figure six); for the census of 1938 gives the population of the world as 2,012,000,000 in

Hammond's Modern Atlas of the World. Since 1931 the population has increased seventy-five and one-half million. (The figures quoted here are outdated, as this book was originally printed in 1941). Divine judgments are already falling on the world, the dizzying earnestness of those in the near future. In Revelation eight, it is said that "the third part" of nine great essentials will be affected seriously under the prophesied woes. What will be the moral result? Will the people be changed Godward? Read the report - "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands ... neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" - 9:20, 21.

A TALE OF TWO SHEPHERDS

Kenneth H. Comber

He left the warmth of his cottage small
To serve in the chilled night and
While Mother could answer the children's call,
Lambs needed their shepherd's care!
Down from the palace of love and light
To serve on this sin-torn earth,
Another Shepherd arrived that dark night:
The night of the Saviour's birth.
They met in the shimmering lantern's glow,
In a stable at Bethlehem.
One was a shepherd of sheep, you know;
The other the Shepherd of men.
The Judean shepherd is long since gone,
He sleeps 'neath the earthly sod.
The heavenly Shepherd lives on and on,
For He is the Son of God.
Oh, glorious truth! They will meet again,
But not in a shadowed stall;
When the shepherd of sheep hails the Shepherd of men:
Prince of Peace, King of kings, Lord of all!

CHRIST IN AUTHORITY

Chapter Ten

"And I saw another mighty Angel coming down out of the Heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow upon His head, and His face as the sun; and His feet as pillars of fire" - 10:1 Greek.

In chapter one we saw the same sublime Personage walking as a scrutinizing Examiner of His heavenly people, the Church, whose members are on earth. In chapter four we saw Him as Creator of all things, and in chapter five as Redeemer of men; hence, worthy to open the seals. In chapter ten we behold the same One, who receives authority in Heaven to execute the final purpose of God (chapter five), now descend and stand on land (Palestine) and sea (the nations) in flaming majesty, grandeur, and power actually to assume full control of all things on earth. "Clothed with a cloud" signifies that the saints then in glory will be associated with Him in His taking charge on earth. "A rainbow was upon His head" indicates that He will show mercy to the repentant in that time of judgment. "His face was as it were the sun" shows that Jesus, as the one bright Orb of splendor, will bring to light every hidden thing and expel the darkness of that night of sorrow. "His feet as pillars of fire" speak of His full purpose and power to punish the wicked, because they reject His mercy today.

THE END OF GENTILE TIMES

"And He had in His hand a little book open: and He set His right foot upon the sea, and His left foot on the earth" - 10:2. Concerning the "little book," see notes on verse nine. "Gentile times" will not continue to the close of the tribulation days or the battle of Armageddon, as is taught generally; though the Lord will bring Gentile rebellion and usurpation to an end then. When "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" shall set up His throne in Heaven, then He will begin to control things on earth also. Study the following reflections.

First. Jesus announced that from 71 A.D. - "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" - Luke 21:24. John announced later that the same holy city shall they (the Gentiles) tread under foot forty and two months" - 11:2. The times of the Gentiles must be fulfilled before the latter can begin. The forty-two months treading down can have no meaning if it is a part of "the times of the Gentiles" mentioned above. Indeed, John being required to "measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein" (11:1) shows that the Lord will take charge of the city and separate the penitent Jews unto Himself, allowing the court to fall into the hands of the nations for a brief time; that is, three and one-half years.

Second. If God gave the Gentiles dominion for a certain period, how can He justly give the dominion to the Jews within that period? How can He send judgment upon the nations and seek to oust them, if they still have the right to reign? Nay! The truth is that, when Jesus will begin war with Satan to thrust him down and when He "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" will take His authority on earth shown by standing on land and sea, the nations will be usurpers. This is a truth that ninety-five percent of Bible students overlook. Jesus came in His Father's Name; but the Jews received Him not. He is coming again with authority to reign. At that moment, "another shall come in his own name," and him they will receive - John 5:43. Will he not be a usurper? With that one, the Jews will enter into a covenant (Daniel 9:27), instead of accepting God's "Messenger of the covenant" of grace - Malachi 3:1. He will be one of the leading rulers or nations of the world. If

Christ's rulership begins after Gentile dominion ends, every dominion not in subjection to Him will be in usurpation and rebellion.

Third. It was said to Daniel, "Seventy weeks (490 years) are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" - Daniel 9:24. For what purpose? That the Lord might bestow certain special blessings upon Israel. That period should come within Gentile dominion. But the so-called "last week of Daniel" (Daniel 9:26) does not have to be the last seven years of Gentile times, as many suppose. Neither can that week of seven years occupy the same time as that expressed by Daniel 9:27. The last or seventieth week (which began with the death of Christ - Daniel 9:26) was a period of blessing throughout. But, Daniel 9:27 depicts a time of trouble and sorrow, with no intimation of blessing. Notice the following.

Now I want to show you that the last seven years of that determined time for Israel was fulfilled from the death of Christ to the stoning of Stephen - Acts 7. Daniel 9:24 was fulfilled from Calvary to Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was not poured out upon the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10) till about seven years after Pentecost, because God had to make good His Word to the prophet in fulfilling the last week (seven years) of the seventy determined weeks. All that was to be accomplished during those 490 decreed years was done before 40 A.D. Then God gave repentance to Gentiles - Acts 10, 11. By His death, the Lord finished "transgression," made "an end of sins," and made "reconciliation for iniquity"; and by His resurrection, He brought "in everlasting righteousness," sealed "up the vision and prophecy," and anointed "the most Holy" - Daniel 9:24. After His resurrection, Jesus gave His ancient people seven years to receive Him as their Messiah and King, as Stephen's gaze into Heaven shows - Acts 7:55, 56. Even the "all things common" among the disciples speaks of the year of jubilee which will come when Jesus Christ shall be received by the nation Israel - Leviticus 25. Pentecost came in the Jewish year of jubilee. Peter's visit to Cornelius, ten years later, was an earnest of the Jews' ministry to the nations after Jesus comes to reign.

The Jews rejected Christ at the beginning of this age. Hence, the fulfillment of the seventieth week was only an earnest of the full measure of blessing yet to come. It was wholly a period of mercy and grace, as Daniel 9:24 indicates. Therefore, Daniel 9:27 must be fulfilled in distress and perplexity. It will begin in "trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7) and end in "wrath" - Revelation 6:16, 17. That is added proof that the fulfillment of the terrible week of Daniel 9:27 will be beyond the "times of the Gentiles." God will not authorize that covenant to be made with the Jews. That will be a usurpation. That "he" will be "another" who "shall come in his own name" (John 5:43), and will presume to take the place that belongs to Jesus Christ only. The Jews, the Gentiles, and the Laodicean church will be out of Divine order which will occasion the sorrow, pain, destruction, and death of that period. Our Lord will be compelled to fight for His official rights. That situation is typified by David's reign over Israel. He ruled over Judah for seven years (even as Jesus will rule in Heaven), before he became actual ruler over the ten tribes; though he was king by Divine choice over the whole nation from the time he ascended the throne over Judah. See II Samuel 2:4 with Psalm 78:70-72.

"The fullness of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:25) must not be confounded with "The times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). The former is religious, and refers to the calling out from among the Gentiles a people for the Name of the Lord - Acts 15:14. Their fullness will come with the catching away of the Church. The light that

dispels the blindness from Israel will then break forth. The angel with "the everlasting Gospel," in view of the coming Millennial Kingdom, will follow. Compare Matthew 24:14 with Revelation 14:6 for a proof of these facts.

THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY

"And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth. and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices" - 10:3. There should be no doubt as to who is that "mighty Angel." In 5:5 He is called "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." It is written - "The Lord ... shall cry, yea, roar; He shall behave Himself mightily against His enemies" - Isaiah 42:13. God had said to His Son long ago, "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" - Psalm 2:8.

Having redeemed men by His precious blood and thus made them His property, as a Savior He has been calling out "a people for His Name" - Acts 15:14. Meanwhile, as a Lion, He has been couching in His den ("whom the Heaven must receive" - Acts 3:21) - lying in wait for His prey - Genesis 49:9; Job 38:39, 40. Now being roused by the cry of His longing people Israel and by the ferocity of His enemies, He roars after His prey and seeks His meat from God - Psalm 104:21. He roars out His purpose to possess at once His promised possessions. Harken to Amos 3:4 - "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey?"

"The seven thunders" that respond are, doubtless, the four living ones and twenty-four elders proclaiming in detail the character of the visitations that accompany His seizure of His possessions on earth. That those thunder voices are the intelligent utterances of men is evident; for John says, "I was about to write." He understood what they said. But a Voice from Heaven exclaimed, "Write them not." Is this not all added proof that the nations will be usurping authority?

Else why must Christ fight to gain His God-given sovereignty?

We praise Thee, O Jehovah! Thou wilt for Israel care! Jehovah-Shammah, the precious thought! Henceforth the Lord is there.

THE FINAL OATH

"And the Angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up His hand to Heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever ... that there should be time no longer" - 10:5, 6. Daniel saw the same Personage and heard a similar declaration announcing that after "a time, times, and half a time," or three and a half years, those judgments would end - Daniel 12:7. That explains John's words "time no longer." That cannot mean that time will then end and eternity begin; for the thousand years reign of Christ must come in after that. It simply means that, when Jesus takes hold of the situation, there will be no longer time allowed to the nations to usurp His place; their times will have ended. "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel" (11:15) (the latter half of the week), "when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets" - 10:7. Concerning the Jews, Daniel prayed: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for "Mine own sake, for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy Name" - Daniel 9:19. Jesus declared - "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily" - Luke 18:7, 8.

"And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter" - 10:10. The little book became the substance of John's prophecy; for, after his exile was ended, he was to "prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" - 10:11. What he ate, he also wrote for us.

His prophecy was suggestive of the prophecy of the two witnesses whom he mentions in the next chapter.

Why do many appreciate the Truth so little? Why do they give it forth with so little power?

Because they simply hear it. They do not eat it. They do not chew, masticate, enjoy, and swallow it. It is not incorporated in their very being. The head hears the Truth, but the heart does not appropriate it; also, because the Word divides between the "soul and spirit" - Hebrews 4:12. Most believers prefer the soulish life. They draw back from the wholly spiritual life. It is too narrow, too seclusive, too expensive. It is the utter rejection of the old man, as the Apostle Paul exclaimed - "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" - Galatians 2:20.

Jehovah reigns, exalted high
O'er all the earth, o'er all the sky.
Jehovah reigns, His throne is high,
His robes are light and majesty.
Jehovah reigns, He dwells in light,

THE TWO WITNESSES

Chapter Eleven

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod (or staff): and the Angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein" - 11:1. This chapter is really the continuation of the preceding. Though "the Angel" is not mentioned in the Greek, yet it is His Voice that speaks. The authority He assumes in chapter ten continues here. He is the Lord Jesus Anointed, taking His place as "the God of the earth" - 11:4. This is further proof of His right to the supremacy, and that all other rulers are then usurpers.

Remember that all of this occurred to the apostle in a vision. Hence, he did not actually measure with a literal rule; but he symbolized the ministry of the two witnesses who will measure with the Word of God. See Ezekiel 2:9, 10. They will announce protection and comfort to those Jews who will receive their message and believe God, and give warning of the treading down of Jerusalem.

During the first half of the week (of seven years), the Jews will have liberty to worship in the temple; but, during the latter half, the temple will be defiled by "the abomination of desolation" - Daniel 11:31; Matthew 24:15. Those who believe, being measured by the infallible rule of Divine Truth, will be the only temple for God. A part of that treading down of the Holy City is also called, "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), "a time of trouble" unparalleled (Daniel 12:1), and a "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21), which will continue 1010 days.

TWO UNIQUE CHARACTERS

"And I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" - 11:3. This is truly an interesting couple. Let us not begot them by fanciful interpretations. Observe that they are "standing" (ready to receive orders) "before the God of the earth" who is, therefore, back of all their movements.

He calls them, "My two witnesses"; for they will be His chief representatives in behalf of Israel on earth in those days. Also, we read, "These are the two olive trees." That is, they will be anointed with the Holy Spirit; and, by ministry of the Word, they will communicate life and power to others.

They are also called "two candlesticks (lampstands)," for they will be the chief spiritual luminaries in Jerusalem at that time. "Clothed in sackcloth" indicates the sorrowful, oppressive, and unbelieving time of their prophecy, and the great need of their hearers turning in repentance to God.

Why two witnesses? Because two is the least number of competent and invincible testimony. Compare Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15. Jesus also declared that "the testimony of two men is true" - John 8:17. Surely, in that coming day of religious darkness, two well-equipped Jews will be required to lift the scales from the eyes of their fellows. Doubtless, Daniel foresaw these men as "other two" who shall speak in the end time - Daniel 12:5.

EXACTLY WHO ARE THEY?

We have a suggestion, if not a clue, to their identity in the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. Zerubbabel was made governor in Jerusalem, and Joshua was made high priest.

Haggai and Zechariah were the prophets or Divine witnesses, at that particular time. Just so it will be, when again God sets to work to bring His ancient people out of the two thousand years of blindness and captivity. "The prince of the host" (Daniel 8:11) corresponds with Zerubbabel, and the implied priest (for there will be sacrifices offered) corresponds with Joshua. The chief men "that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days" - Daniel 11:33. These chief men correspond with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Who are those instructors in Daniel's account if not the "two witnesses" in John's account? Those witnesses may be two companies of people led by two prominent men.

Then those two witnesses will, doubtless, prophesy as John foretells "in the spirit and power of Elias" - Luke 1:17. Men, in their vain attempts to prove that Moses and Elijah actually will be those two prophets, have failed to note what Jesus said about Elijah in Matthew 11:14 and 17:10-13. The disciples inquired of Him, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist," of whom He had said before, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."

When announcing the birth of John, the angel said - "He shall go before Him (the Lord) in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" - Luke 1:17. John did all that, but the Jewish nation refused his witness. These Scriptures certainly show that it never was intended that the same identical Elijah should again come and prophesy, for John's ministry was the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5, 6 if the Jews had received him. Accordingly, we cannot expect Elijah to come in person at the end of this age. We can only look for "two witnesses," as John the apostle declares, whom God will choose for that day to give the final wooing and warning to the Jews "in the spirit and power of Elias" even as John the Baptist did. God is never short of material. He will find two persons, or two companies, whom He will enable to perform His will.

THE TIME OF THEIR PROPHECY

The two witnesses shall prophesy for three and a half years, beginning with the week of seven years. Thirty days before they begin to witness, the daily or continual burnt offering will be taken away by coercion of "the little horn" of Daniel 8:9 who, doubtless, will become the second beast or false prophet - Rev. 13:11-18. The image of Revelation thirteen, "the abomination of desolation," will be set up at the end of their testimony. At the same time, the beast or anti-Christ will slay the two witnesses. There are several inferential evidences of the time of their prophecy; but we have one positive proof of it. Their career ends with the ending of the second woe - 11: 12-14. How exact are these dates in Daniel.

The second woe ends and the third woe begins in the middle of the week, when "the abomination that maketh desolate" is set up in the temple - Daniel 11:31. See Revelation 11:14. Note, they have not only power, but authority; that is, official right from God to execute judgments in connection with their prophecy. They foretell judgments, then execute them. They surely will have no small part in the Divine program of the first half of Daniel 9:27.

FINALE OF THE WITNESSES

"And when they shall have finished their testimony" - 11:7. Thank God! No power, no scheme, can stop those who move in His will. The Jews sought many times to slay Jesus, but they could not until the time appointed of the Father. The enemy tried in various ways to end Paul's life; but he could not do it till Paul had finished his course. Then, when one's work is completed, death even at the devil's cruel hand is not defeat but final victory and eternal gain.

"The beast that ascendeth out of the pit of the abyss" (250 days beforehand - see notes on Revelation thirteen) "shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them" - 11:7. They will be true to God, and faithfully warn the Jews against the coming reign of darkness.

Some of their hearers will believe their words and stand against the beast. But, behold, how the Lord gets the greater victory out of that apparent defeat.

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" - 11:8. Jerusalem is that great city, for there is where Jesus was crucified. Observe the prohibitory power in their dead bodies. The passersby will behold them; but no one will be able to put them into graves. God takes care of His own always. Oh, what blind rejoicing will seize the Christ-rejecting earth-dwellers at that time. They will indulge in great frenzied devilish hilarity over the death of God's true servants, who faithfully will have sought to bless them. But they will esteem their blessing only torment - 11:10. The Spirit of God takes care of the spirit of life while it is in the body and after it is departed from the body. It is from God in the first place, and He looks after it forever.

In Revelation four, we learned that Heaven opened and this same Voice called John up hither. That is the Voice of the Lord. If people deny the teaching of ranks of believers, how do they explain this? There will be at least four living ones and twenty-four elders in Heaven long before the two witnesses will go up; also, the great multitude of Revelation seven, and the man child born - 12:5; 7:9-17. Behold the last testimony of God's favor toward those men, and His confirmation of their stern prophecy. Scarcely are they gone, when there occurs "a great earthquake" - 11:13. That will occur in Jerusalem. Some Jews then dwelling there will accept the witness and warning of those two messengers. Some of them will, doubtless, be killed afterward because they give God glory and because they will not receive the mark of the beast. This is all yet future and will have a literal fulfillment in due time.

THE THIRD WOE

"The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly" - 11:14. According to the last three verses of chapter five, John seems to be carried forward in vision to the end of the tribulation days. Then every created thing in all the universe will praise the Lamb of God for His marvelous work of redemption and its accomplishments. Likewise, the last five verses of chapter eleven are of a similar character. It is declared

in 10:7 that - "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished."

Now these closing verses come under the sounding of that very seventh angel. His words are the proclamation of realized hope, as if "this present evil age" had come to an end and the Millennium had begun. He exclaims, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign into the ages of the ages" - 11:15. The twenty-four elders fall down and adore the Lord God Almighty because He is reigning. By anticipation, the nations are seen angry - the time for the judgment of the dead and the rewards of the righteous had arrived.

John was inspired to call "those things which be not as though they were" - Romans 4:17. We, too, should rejoice in hope; though hope may seem to be postponed. "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" - Hebrews 10:37.

TWO WONDERS IN HEAVEN

Chapter Twelve

"And there was seen in Heaven a great sign; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and being with child, she was crying, being in travail, and pain to bring forth" - 12:1, 2. This is one of the most difficult and interesting portions of the book of Revelation. However, here as elsewhere, the Word of God is its own commentary. Observe first that this is not actually a woman, but a sign. In his vision, John beheld an object that looked like a woman.

God likens His body of people to a woman. Speaking to Jerusalem as representing Israel, it is written, "The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth" - Isaiah 54:6. The Church is likened to a woman; for Paul writes, "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ" - II Corinthians 11:2. The entire company of God's people is called, "The household of God" and "The whole family in Heaven and earth" - Ephesians 2:19; 3:15. Note another important fact. The sign-woman was first seen in Heaven; but, having given birth to her child, she is seen then on earth - 12:6, 13-17. Hold this well in mind. We shall see that the woman in Heaven with clothing and crown constitutes all believers who will be in Heaven at that time, just before the middle of the week.

THE WOMAN'S ARRAY

Who are the sun, the twelve stars, and the moon? Malachi calls the Lord "the Sun of righteousness" - Malachi 4:2. In the Song of Solomon, the Bride is compared with "the sun" and with "the moon." And saints "shine as luminaries in the world" - Philippians 2:15. Joseph dreamed that "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance" to him - Genesis 37:9. His father and brethren at once understood that he would someday rule over them, which indeed came to pass. In that dream, Jacob was the sun, his wife was the moon, and their twelve sons were the stars. Joseph was the most brilliant of all. In Revelation one, all of God's shepherds are termed "the seven stars"; and, in 22:16, Jesus calls Himself "the bright and morning Star." These references combine to teach us that the sun, moon, and stars symbolize God's people in certain aspects. Saints put on Christ, "the Sun of righteousness."

"Clothed with the sun." In our previous study, we saw in Heaven the full overcomers - the four living ones and twenty-four elders. Mary was truly arrayed with honor and glory in bringing forth the Child who was destined to be "the Sun of righteousness." Indeed, He together with those so entirely like Him, even the full overcomers, constitute the company with which the sign-woman is invested. The sun is our greatest material luminary. It was appointed to rule the day" - Genesis 1:16. How expressive of the Lamb and His Bride, reflecting the fullest and brightest sheen of glory, filling the heavenly city with light. The "twelve stars" refer to "the spirits of just men made perfect" - Hebrews 12:23. They are Old Testament saints, who are now in Heaven with glorified bodies. Compare Matthew 27:52, 53 with Hebrews 11:35. Doubtless, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah are included. The number twelve here is most likely a representative number, God's governmental number. It suggests the authority and power that the wonder-woman has in the universe as associated with Christ in His dominion.

"The moon under her feet." We saw also another company of believers in Heaven who have been called, "The tribulation saints." In the seventh chapter, they are seen in Heaven. These will constitute "the moon under her feet." The moon shines by means of borrowed light. Even so these lesser saints, being only partial overcomers hence much occupied with their tribulations, do not overcome without the special intervention and help of full-grown saints. Furthermore, they are children in grace; and, like children in a home, they are at their mother's feet. Another fact, the moon being nearest the earth looks larger than the sun; likewise, the moon-group of believers will be larger than the sun-group. Study the countless company

of Revelation seven.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

In the introduction, we remarked that the book of Revelation cannot be understood fully without a knowledge of Paul's teaching. This is especially true in the study of this twelfth chapter.

Therefore, we shall turn to Ephesians, wherein we read of "the whole family" of God with its respective groups or classes and of all stages of experience and ages. All those who scripturally believe "are the children of Abraham" and constitute "the household of faith" - Galatians 3:7; 6:10. These are also called "the household of God" and "the whole family in Heaven and earth" - Eph. 2:19; 3:15. At this juncture, remember that John saw the sign-woman in Heaven and on earth.

This whole family certainly must include all believers, whether before Christ or since Christ.

Furthermore, in Ephesians 4:12, we are informed of "the Body of Christ"; which, of course, is only a part of the family or household of faith or of God. Believers on Him during this age, called out to His Name, constitute the Body or Church of Christ. Also, in Ephesians 4:13, we read of "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," unto which believers are to grow.

Are these simply figures of speech to tickle someone's fancy? Are they not rather full of meaning?

Again, consider the deep and solemn significance of Ephesians five. Herein, is expressed the closest sweetest Divine union between husband and wife. But the profound typical meaning is what we must see. For the apostle ends these exhortations on marital fellowship by saying, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church" - Ephesians 5:32. Wonderful this truth! But we are not left in the dark as to its spiritual meaning. God is "the Father of all them that believe," and they are His family or household. Jesus Christ is His eldest Son. All present- age believers "are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones" - Ephesians 5:30.

Then, even as the Lord took out of Adam's side a rib of which He builded for him a woman, so the great Head of this great family is taking out of the Body of Christ a company of believers who shall constitute the Bride of Christ. Not all of the Church will be in the Bride, for they will not all qualify for that place. Further proof of that is seen in Ephesians six, in speaking to "children," "masters," and "servants." Are these not in the Church? Yes, truly. But they are not typical of the Bride for she is a wife, not a servant. She is a full-grown woman, not a child.

The "great mystery" here is this - that Christ should select out of His Body certain ones who shall constitute His Bride. Therefore, we remark that the woman - clothed with the sun, crowned with the stars, and the moon beneath her feet - is simply another way of expressing the whole family of God so fully depicted in Ephesians. We see God's family on earth, in Ephesians five; but, in Revelation twelve, we see it in Heaven and on earth.

THE MANLY SON BORN

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne" - 12:5. At once everyone asks, "Who is the man child?" We answer that it is a certain body of believers, even as his mother the sign-woman is the whole Body of believers. First, observe that the man child cannot be the Bride of Christ; for, she is seen by representation in Heaven, in 4:4-7. Neither can he be the Bride, because she will be a full-grown woman. This is only a youth, though a strong manly son. Samuel also was called "a man child," but he was not then full grown - 1 Samuel 1:11. The meaning of the phrase "man child" is simply "strong, robust, healthy, fully developed" as a child. It cannot be the Bride, for it is only caught up to God and His throne; but the Bride is seen in the overcomers in the midst of the throne.

Observe that, in chapter four, we are informed of a certain company of saints in Heaven known as the four living creatures and twenty-four elders. Then, in chapter seven, we are informed of two other companies; namely, the hundred and forty-four thousand and the innumerable company. John sees the countless group "before the throne, and before the Lamb"; but he does not see the one hundred and forty-four thousand there until in chapter fourteen. Therefore, how and when do they arrive in Heaven? We should most logically look for them somewhere between chapters seven and fourteen. In chapter twelve only is there any possibility of finding them. Who else can the one hundred and forty-four thousand be if not the "man child"? We must bear in mind constantly that the woman is not actually a woman, but a company of men and women - a sign, or wonder woman; likewise, the child is a sign child. John saw all this in vision. The phrase, "the remnant of her seed" indicates that the "man child" is a body of people - 12:17.

Great prominence is given to the "man child" or one hundred and forty-four thousand here, because this company of believers constitute the transition of God's dealings from the Church to Israel. In the beginning

of this age, the one hundred and twenty became the transition from Israel to the Church. Because Israel nationally rejected Christ, the Lord suspended His dealings with them and introduced the Church - the Body of Christ. At the beginning of the next age, the order must be reversed. The one hundred and forty-four thousand will form the nucleus of the coming Kingdom, though they are a part of the Church. They will be the transition from the Church to Israel. The first chapters of the Acts were the transition Scriptures at the beginning of this age, as Peter's epistles are the transition writings for the commencement of the Millennium. They refer to the revelation of Christ. The first group of the Church consisted of Israelites, and so will the last group of the Church.

ISAIAH'S ANNOUNCEMENT

"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child"

- Isaiah 66:7. Here we read also of the birth of the same man child. Isaiah, not writing of the Church but of Israel only, did not see the travail pains of the wonder-woman which John describes. That is, he did not see the terrific opposition of apostatized Christendom against the one hundred and forty-four thousand as they hold the victory in qualifying for translation. He saw only "Jacob's trouble," or the time of unspeakable tribulation upon the Jews - Matthew 24:15-21.

Therefore, he declares that the man child was born before the woman travailed, or before the middle of the week.

Then Isaiah informs us of another birth, even the conversion of the Jews as a nation. "Shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" - Isaiah 66:8. "Zion" means "the inhabitants of Jerusalem." They will be in sore distress (travail pains) by the oppression of the nations gathered against them - Zechariah 14. Those who flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:16-19) constitute, in part at least, the woman in the wilderness. "Her children" (Zion's children - Isaiah 66:8) are "the remnant of her seed" - Revelation 12:14, 17.

John saw the great sign-woman both in Heaven and on earth. He saw her in pain in bringing forth the man child, as well as the pain that followed its birth. Compare 12:2 with 12:14-17. But Isaiah saw the woman on earth only, and as Israel. Inasmuch as he was to write only of Kingdom facts, he wrote simply of the fact of the birth of the man child and not of the process of that birth. He beheld the beginning of the Kingdom period. This is a powerful proof that the man child is the one hundred and forty-four thousand which completes the Church in glory and links it with the Kingdom on earth.

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne" - 12:5. The bringing forth and catching away of the man child is the ascension of the one hundred and forty-four thousand whom we see next in 14:1-5. The Lord Jesus will rule the nations with absolute authority (Psalm 2); and the one hundred and forty-four thousand will rule with Him and with the other glorified saints.

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore (1260) days" - 12:6. John saw the sign-woman first in Heaven, because she is constituted of all believers who will be in Heaven at that time. He saw her on earth also, because all believers then on earth will form a part of her.

What a positive proof that the man child is a company of believers, and that his birth and ascension are the departure from earth of that company. Who can it be but the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed in chapter seven, seeing that they will be the only part of the Church at that time not yet translated? The earth-welling portion of the woman will flee into the wilderness.

Though she is still in the world, God takes care of her in a miraculous manner. That company of people, the woman in the wilderness, after the birth of the man child will be the fourth rank. Doubtless, we read of them in 2:26 and 18:4. We read of them also in Isaiah 26:20, 21. The tribulation days, or "Jacob's trouble," will be on at that time; for the anti-Christ will be in power then. By comparing verses six and fourteen, we learn the exact value of "a time (360), and times (720), and half a time (180)," which equal 1260 days or three and a half years.

SATAN CAST DOWN

"And there was war in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" - 12:7. That event is still future. After the whole Church is in Heaven with glorified bodies, ready to possess her heavenly inheritance, Satan must be cast out to make room for the man child. "The principalities, authorities, the world rulers of the darkness of this age, the spirituals of wickedness in the heavenlies" must be repulsed to earth to make room for the Church whose blood-bought right it is to reign where Satan is now reigning.

We fight for this place now, even of the good fight of faith," because by faith we are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies - Ephesians 2:6. But Michael shall actually drive the devil and his angels down from Heaven. Hallelujah! That will be the fulfillment of Jesus' words in Luke 10:18 - "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven." For it was by faith that Jesus saw it. God had originally, ordained those principalities, among whom were Gabriel and Michael and all the holy angels. But Satan sinned, and has led other angels to sin also. Hence, he forfeited his right to the heavenlies. He caused man on earth to sin also. But God will reverse things, and give those who believe on His Son this very place in the heavens. That is why those who take their place by faith in the heavenlies with Christ have such a fierce fight with the devil. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" - Ephesians 6:12. Satan does not want the redeemed to occupy that position. John saw those things in vision only. They are yet future. So with the following.

"Neither was their place found any more in Heaven" - 12:8. Of course not. There is room for the redeemed of the Lord only. They who bank on God's faithfulness for two thousand years prove Him true. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." There is no chance to juggle with this Scripture. It is too plain to see who is meant by the red dragon. It is also clear that the devil is not yet in hell, as some people suppose. "He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" - 12:9. In 12:4 those angels are said to be "the third part of the stars of heaven." Think of the damage the devil has done to God's domain; but that is far more than repaired by the redemption of Christ Jesus.

VICTORY IN HEAVEN

"And I heard a loud voice saying in Heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" - 12:10. Who uttered that loud voice? The living ones and elders and the countless multitude of Revelation seven. Who are meant by "our brethren"? The 144,000 figured by the birth of the man child. All Heaven will unite in a great shout of triumph, because the entire mystical Body of Christ will be there and Satan will have been hurled down. Of course, there must be universal victory in Heaven before it can come on earth, because Jesus Christ and His Body shall reign from Heaven. The salvation from Satan's presence in heaven will have come. The power of God which "raised Him (Jesus) from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" will be fully demonstrated to the uttermost. Then will be fully fulfilled the words of Jesus, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" - Matthew 28:18.

Before the Lord can "restore again the Kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6) which will be on earth, He must inaugurate it in Heaven. Because Jesus Anointed shall have universal authority in Heaven and on earth, His commandment to His disciples to baptize into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit will be consummately fulfilled at that time. God will resume His dealings with Israel, pouring upon them "the Spirit of grace and of supplication" - Zechariah 12:10; Ezekiel 39:29. They will no longer baptize into the Name of Jesus because the Church, His Body, will have been gathered out and taken to Heaven; and she will judge and reign with Him.

THE THRONE OF JESUS CHRIST

To avoid confusion, we again call attention to the present throne of God where Jesus is seated with Him as our present faithful High Priest; that is, in the highest Heavens. Also, note the future throne of Jesus Christ as Lord of all, when He shall actually possess the authority mentioned above. Notice that, in 3:21, He speaks distinctly of two thrones - "My Father in His throne" and "My throne." The throne of Jesus will be where Satan's throne now is. Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air" - Ephesians 2:2. In our ascension, we shall "meet the Lord in the air." "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven" (I Thess. 4:16, 17); that is, the highest Heaven where God's throne now is. Consult Hebrews 1:3 and 8:1. Daniel beheld the thrones "cast down" - Daniel 7:9. And John says, "Behold, a throne was set in Heaven"; that is, it was being set while he was looking. This is the throne that Jesus Christ as a Man shall occupy in Heaven, and be "King of kings, and Lord of lords." This is "the throne of glory" that Hannah saw by faith - I Samuel 2:8. It is from this very throne that God "will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained," even Jesus Christ - Acts 17:31. This is "the throne of glory" upon which the Son of Man shall sit when He "shall come in His glory" - Matthew 25:31. This is "the heavenly place," which we now occupy by faith and where we shall reign with Christ in glory; and from which we shall reign with Him over all the earth.

The twelve apostles (Paul is not included in these) of the Lamb "shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," whereby they shall be the immediate rulers of the nations - Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29, 30.

PRESENT VICTORY OVER SATAN

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony - 12:11.

The word "overcome" here is exactly the same as occurs so often in chapters two and three, and the word "prevail" in 5:5. The particular items which these overcome are Satan's accusations against them before God as expressed in the preceding verse. Believers have no merit in themselves, no goodness of their own, no strength to withstand evil, no power even of themselves to love God. Nay, "when I would do good, evil is present with me" - Romans 7:21. Peter's egregious failure is a plain picture of the disgraceful weakness of the strength of the old creation - Matthew 26:69-75.

The devil accuses us not only to ourselves and to one another; but, he dares to tell God what miserable failures we are, how weak and sinful we are. He said to the Lord about Job, "Put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to Thy face" - Job 1:11. But did Job do so? Nay, verily! How did he overcome the dreadful conflict, when his possessions were all swept away and his children became worldly? He acknowledged his own weakness and his entire dependence upon God by offering sacrifices to God. Job typically offered up Christ as his only merit and righteousness and strength and safety. Likewise, we meet Satan's charge of weakness and sinfulness as to the old creation, by admitting it every bit; while at the same time declaring that Christ died for us, shed His blood for our sins, and put them away thereby. We shout it out that we also died with Christ, and count our old sinful self dead indeed because God counts it so.

We firmly believe in the finished work of Calvary for us, and we boldly announce our faith in the devil's face. That is prevailing through the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.

Such believers love "not their lives unto the death." While counting the old self-life dead, the new Christ-life is gladly poured out for the salvation of others. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself," said Paul. Such saints "die daily." "Though our outward man perish" because of self-sacrificing service for the welfare of others, "yet the inward man is renewed day by day" by feeding on Christ; and, of course, never perishes. Hallelujah!

Such then are the conflicts and the triumphs on earth of those who arrive in Heaven as the manly son. The same is true of all overcomers, the heat of the battle and the value of the victory being according to that particular rank. Do you wonder at the acclaim? "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them" - 12:12. It would seem that all the glorified saints will shout this triumphant acclaim to one another and to angels. At the beginning of Christ's reign in Heaven and over the earth, Psalm 150 will certainly be most sublimely and triumphantly sung by the united redeemed voices in Heaven and on earth. Compare the first and the last verses. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary: praise Him in the firmament of His power. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord." But it will be sung first in Heaven. See Revelation nineteen. And it may fittingly begin at that point. Thirteen times the word "praise" or "hallelujah" occurs in this last little Psalm.

ATTENDANT SCENES ON EARTH

"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" - 12:12. In the notes on chapter nine, we saw that the ascent of the angel from the pit occurs simultaneously with the fall of the star, or Satan, from heaven to earth. The beast, who before will receive a deadly wound, also will ascend out of the pit of the abyss at that same time - 11:7; 17:8. All these occur two hundred and fifty days before the middle of the week.

The "woe" in this verse includes all the indescribable and drawn-out suffering that the anti-Christ shall precipitate upon men - destruction of property and life and nations warring against nations as has never yet had a parallel, not even in the present wars. Five months of perplexing preparations (9:5-11), and then will begin the white heated national and international ferocity of devil-inspired men. "The great tribulation," which is especially Israel's chastisement, will be embraced in that period. "A short time" will be the duration of anti-Christ's reign, namely forty-two months (13:5), which will also be the devil's duration on earth. It is then that he "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," even as now he appears as "an angel of light" by means of his ministers. Compare I Peter 5:8 with II Corinthians 11:13-15.

Satan knows that he must be cast into the pit of the abyss by "an angel" at the coming of Jesus with His holy devotees. He will have had his last blow at God's heavenly people; but he will make a final assault upon Israel. He had induced them to unbelief in the wilderness. His minister Balaam led them into idolatry -

Numbers 25 with Revelation 2:14. He stirred up in them national pride till they cried for a king like the nations. He caused them to hate their Messiah, Jesus. And he is to blame for their national blindness. Finally, he will do all he can in that last brief time, to utterly exterminate Israel from the earth.

"And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" - 12:15. Still bear in mind that John saw this in vision. Hence, the woman is a body of people. The flood from Satan's mouth is the armies which he shall stir up against God's people. Isaiah fifty nine describes Israel's sad condition and God's just chastisement of them by means of their adversaries. God arises to deliver them.

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall put him to flight" - Isaiah 59:19. God may again cleave the earth and swallow up their enemies, even as He did with Moses' enemies - Numbers 16:30. By comparing Revelation 6:12 with Matthew 24:29, we gather that there will be a great earthquake at that very time; which is, doubtless, the meaning of "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" - the armies which Satan will send to destroy Israel.

"The remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" - 12:17. These are the Jews in Palestine especially, who will have believed on Jesus under the ministry of the two witnesses of Revelation eleven. Some of them will be killed, no doubt, by the anti-Christ. See the souls "under the altar" - 6:9; 15:2, 3.

Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green.
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen.
Birds with gladder songs O'er flow,
Flow'rs with deeper beauties shine.
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His, and He is mine.
When God is nigh
Does Peter safely walk the waves?
The God of storms is near....
Nain's widow has her child restored...
When Jesus passed the bier....
The martyr Stephen fears no stones...
He sees the Son above! ...
And Abraham gives Isaac up...
He knows that God is love....
Brave Daniel in the lions' den...
Three youths in furnace hot...
Time's martyrs pass with courage bold...
For God has not forgot...
And I in lesser spheres have found...
Life's burdens hold no fear...
Nor need I doubt I'm victory bound...
When God my Guide is near.

-- CHARSTEN CHRISTENSEN

THE GREAT WORLD POWERS

Chapters Thirteen to Seventeen

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon" - 13:1, 11.

The Revised Version is evidently at fault here in saying that the dragon, and not John, stood on the sand of the sea. We arrive here at the apostle's third vision viewpoint. In this chapter and in chapters sixteen to eighteen, we get God's view of national and ecclesiastical affairs. The Holy Spirit sets the two beasts here side by side, because they respectively represent the national and ecclesiastical worlds. Therefore, we will study them together. These two beasts together really constitute the anti-Christ, the antithesis of Christ as

the coming rightful King and the true Prophet.

THE FIRST BEAST

In Revelation one, John stood in spirit "on the Lord's day" and heard a trumpet Voice behind him. Turning about, he learned that it was the Voice of the Lord judging His own people in view of "the day of the Lord." In chapter four, John stood in spirit within an open door in Heaven beholding scenes there also in view of the unfolding of "the day of the Lord." From that viewpoint, he also beheld earth scenes.

Here we see him standing in the midst of earth scenes, and beholding them as they will transpire from the beginning of the eventful week (seven years of tribulation) to its awful and glorious close.

This beast pictures the united world powers of that period, even as the lion pictured the seventy years duration of the Babylonian Empire. "The sea" here does not mean a body of water, but it means the "many waters" of 17:1; that is, the "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" - 17:15.

"The sand of the sea" indicates the shifting unsettled conditions of the nations at that time. "A beast ... having seven heads" speaks of the empire which will be formed of seven nations. Rising "up out of the sea" tells how that empire will be formed. We surmise that strife between nations will exist as at the present time. Then certain prominent nations will unite to overthrow those terrible opposing powers. That will, no doubt, result in a seven-headed empire. We are drawing near to that condition now. It will be the agreement of seven nations from the midst of all the nations of the world. John saw this in the vision as it will actually be forming.

By comparing 13:3 with 17:8, 11 we learn that one particular man also is called the beast, because he will be the emperor or world-ruler - a dictator. He will receive the deadly wound and be healed and will be brought up from the pit of the abyss. Compare 13:3 with 11:7. The emperor of Babylon was represented by a head of gold; but Daniel said also to Nebuchadnezzar its first king, "Thou art this head of gold," which expressed his dominant authority - Daniel 2:38. "The ten horns" on the beast "art ten kings" - 17:12.

"The name of blasphemy" on the head of the beast expresses the exceeding wicked character of the coming world empire. It appears yet more wicked in - 17:3, even as "a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy." The "great red dragon ... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" is the source and power of that blasphemous wickedness. He is "the prince of this world." Nevertheless, some of those very nations call themselves Christian nations today; but, God calls them bloody wild beasts, because they count Him out. Their real character is set forth in the following.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BEAST

"And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" - 13:2. Consider studiously Daniel seven, where we find a graphic picture of the first four world powers. The beastly features of those first three empires of Gentile times will be the basic features of the coming world empire.

Daniel seven teaches that the lion, by his strength and ferocity, represented the Babylonian Empire throughout its duration of seventy years. Hence, "the mouth of a lion" in John's vision means that the coming empire will roar like a lion, "speaking great things and blasphemies...blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His Name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in Heaven" - 13:5, 6. Satan will empower its bloodthirsty emperor thus to speak.

The bear, by its stealth, deliberateness, and tenacity, represented the Medo- Persian Empire.

Here "the feet of a bear" indicate that the movements of the coming world empire will be similar to that one.

The Grecian Empire was represented by the agile, swift, dashing leopard, of which Alexander the great was the pronounced expression. John's vision informs us that the first and chief characteristic of the beast or world empire will be leopard-like, because it will operate with dashing rapidity. Any wonder? Nay. For its one absolute ruler will be devil-empowered and authorized, even devil-controlled. That is why the world will worship the devil and the beast - 13:4. Nebuchadnezzar's great image told of a fourth world empire represented by the iron legs and the feet of iron and clay. Daniel's fourth beast, described as "dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly," was another picture of the same fourth empire; that is, the Roman Empire. Why did John not see that fourth likeness? Because the beast which John saw was likened to the other three and will indeed be the feet portion of the great image of Daniel two; that is, the finale of the Roman Empire, though it will not be so called. All the essential features of the first three empires united to make the fourth what it became. Likewise, the essential features of the world powers of Daniel's day will be the prevailing features of the coming world empire, which will have "seven heads" (comprised of seven leading nations) and "ten horns" (ten rulers lending their aid) - 17:9, 12. We are impressed with the oneness of the nations expressed by this verse. Seven kingdoms will be so powerfully possessed by the spirit of Satan that

they are regarded as one, even "the beast."

The Holy Spirit informs us that "the powers that be are ordained of God" - Romans 13:1. Daniel had said to Nebuchadnezzar - "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" - Daniel 2:37. Study also Deuteronomy 32:8 and Daniel 4:25, 35.

"Why then are the national rulers called beasts?" someone may ask. Because they do not reign according to the wisdom of God. "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" - Psalm 49:20. When Nebuchadnezzar was made king over Babylon, Daniel said to him, "Thou art this head of gold" - he was supposed to be the noblest specimen of rulers. But he swelled up with pride and boasted of his wisdom, wealth, and power, and left the God of Heaven out of his reckonings. God terms such an attitude "brutish" or beastly - Psalm 49:6, 10, 12, and 20. So Nebuchadnezzar was dethroned for seven years, and forced to dwell in the fields and eat grass like the cattle. He acted out what the Lord terms such fellows, till he humbled himself, confessed his ignorance, and acknowledged God and His Sovereignty - Daniel 4.

The allied nations today acknowledge God nominally, and are called Christian nations. Evidently they are heading toward the seven-horned empire. But, as the four world empires of history deteriorated from gold to iron and clay, so the empire which John saw will degenerate into an anti-Christian condition with the anti-Christ as its emperor.

The same condition is true of Christendom. God ordained the Church and started it out in holiness and power, in simplicity and unity; but men corrupted it after two hundred years. They substituted human learning and energy for the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit. Theories and bylaws of carnal men took the place of the Bible. The results are schisms, sects, and denominations, great systems "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" - II Timothy 3:5.

Christendom has become a gigantic democracy with many carnal heads, instead of a powerful theocracy with one all-sufficient sublime Head - Jesus Christ. Men have not ruled over the nations as subject to the God of Heaven. Another, even Satan, has interjected himself and taken control of national affairs. He is termed "the god of this world" - II Corinthians 4:4. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood" the Lord, when He was on His way to answer Daniel's prayer - Daniel 10:13. That prince was none other than an evil spirit in mid-heaven acting under the direction of "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30), "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" - Ephesians 2:2. Jesus did not deny to the devil that the kingdoms of this world are under his control today - Matthew 4.

This condition of satanic rule of national affairs will culminate with the blasphemous usurpation of the nations. Hence, John declares here that the dragon (the devil) will give the beast his power, his throne, and great authority. Satan is the chief usurper. The politics of the world are sure to grow worse and worse. Not one of the nations will ever be subject to Divine authority till Jesus comes and "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Anointed One" - 11:15. Then "every knee should bow" and "every tongue should confess" that He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Out of the universal, international, and religious wreckage will arise certain nations that will accept Jesus Christ as the universal Sovereign. The other nations and religious democracy will be overthrown forever. The Divinely ordained nations only will exist and be subject to God.

THE MAN OF SIN

"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast" - 13:3. Remember that the Greek word "therion," here rendered "beast," means a wild savage beast - an appropriate picture of national greed. The word "zoon," translated "beast" in Revelation four and elsewhere, means any creature, any living being, whether man, or animal, or bird.

There is an important turn here in the account of the beast. One man, rather than the empire, becomes the center of attraction. Evidently, the seven-headed empire will be comprised of seven leading nations with their respective kings ruling in agreement with one another. Thus, the week (seven years) of national usurpation will begin with the league of nations formed announcing "peace and safety" - I Thess. 5:3. That will continue a brief time; but trouble will arise. (See notes on chapter eight). As stated in 17:10, five kings will fall; another will be slain by "a sword" - 13:14.

And one, probably by gaining ascendancy over the others, will continue a very brief time. Then the one slain will be healed by a satanic miracle. According to 11:7 and 17:8, he "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" (the pit of the abyss).

This stupendous miracle will call forth the admiration of the world, which will welcome such a fellow to be the universal ruler. It is quite probable that he will be dead just three days, even as Jesus was, which will make him seem to be the Son of God. For nearly three years, there will be a league of seven nations governed by

seven rulers; but, the next three and a half years, one man alone will assume absolute control of the whole empire. Daniel saw this man as a "little horn" - 7:8. Most of that time, he will exploit himself as God. For "one hour," a very brief time, ten kings will fall into line with him. This is all summarized in 13:1.

THE SOURCE OF ONE-MAN POWER

At this point in the world program, 250 days before the middle of that terrible week of seven years, Satan will be cast out of heaven - 12:7-9. Then he will open the pit and bring up his man of devilish destiny and fully empower and authorize him to reign - 13:2. This is how the man slain will be healed and become the sole ruler. But he will "continue a short space" only, or forty-two months" - 17:10; 13:5. That will be the duration of the devil's "short time" on earth also - 12:12. From the moment of his coming out of the pit, that fellow will be reckoned as "that man of sin...the son of perdition" - II Thess. 2:3. As Jesus Christ is "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4), so the anti-Christ will presume to prove his divinity by coming up from beneath. Therefore, we read "that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" - II Thess. 2:4. The world will marvel, wonder after him, and worship him. Oh, how Satan blinds the minds of men. They will reject the true, unselfish, lovely Son of God, and run after a false blasphemous tyrant. They will follow one who will continue a short space, instead of turning to Him who shall reign forever.

"The mystery of iniquity" will culminate with those 1260 most awful days. Apparently the true God will vacate the earth and let Satan do his worst, and let it be seen how wicked the devil can make man. The anti-Christ is the man that the Christ-rejecting world will go wild over and call him their god and savior. But praise be to the true and living God! Over against the apex of the basest most blatant blasphemy of "that man of sin" will stand in majestic, sublimest, heavenly glory, the true Anointed One, together with those whom He has redeemed with His own precious blood.

The flaming effulgence of His descending Presence will destroy that troop of darkness; and the exultant most worthy praises of His people will be as the voice (sound) of many waters" - 19:1-7.

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" - 13:7. "The saints" throughout this chapter refer to Gentiles and Jews who will believe during the tribulation period. Compare 2:26 with 12:15-17 and 18:4. Though they fall by the sword of the anti-Christ, yet they will have "gotten the victory over the beast" - 15:2.

"He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword" - 13:10. Jesus said, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" - Matthew 7:2. God will see to it that they which persecute and slay His people will meet a similar fate. "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled ... when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled" - Isaiah 33:1; Habakkuk 2:8. "If any man have an ear, let him hear" - 13:9. Note how different is this statement from the one uttered seven times to the seven churches - "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Why the difference? Because all whom God will really count as in the Church will have been taken to Heaven by that time. All who then may have ears to hear will hear as dwelling on earth.

THE SECOND BEAST

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon" - 13:11. This beast is termed "the false prophet" - 16:13; 19:20. The first beast will be a political or national man. The second beast will be a religious man. But they will operate hand in glove. The second will work for the first. Together, they will influence the entire world, nationally and religiously. The first will arise from the sea: that is, the restless changing multitudes and nations. The second will come forth apparently more from the quiet, steady, established, religious elements "not with observation," seemingly modest and weak. He has two horns as of a little (arnion, Greek) lamb; that is, he will feign to be small, gentle, inoffensive, yielding. Apparently he will not be a wild beast, but a domestic beast. The lamb speaks of sacrifice and of worship, as if this beast were a priest as well as a prophet in imitation of Christ in both these offices. But God declares him to be a "beast" and a "false prophet." What a counterfeit of the dear "Lamb of God, which bore away the sin of the world."

Observe that this beast has two horns. Two, because he purposes to be cosmopolitan, that he may win the Jews and Gentiles. As the first beast will be the world's greatest conqueror, so the second will be the world's greatest prophet speaking unto and in behalf of all men - the two horns being the double symbol of his power. In man's eye those two fellows, whom the Lord terms wild beasts, will be the greatest characters ever known. Though the beast will look like a lamb, yet his speech will give him away "he spake as a dragon" - 13:11.

In the beginning, "the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety" - II Corinthians 11:3. Likewise, the false

prophet will culminate man's day by his oily crafty "good works and fair speeches," addressing men with authority as of the oracle of God - Romans 16:18. He will prove to be the very embodiment of deception. Indeed, the beast's power will lie in his deception - two lamb-like horns, weak and defenseless. He will depend upon his father, the devil; even as Christ who was really weak in Himself but strong through dependence upon His Father. Consult John 5:19, 30, and 43.

"Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six" - 13:18. Let us look at this strange number.

Four is the number of humanity, even as three is the number of Deity. Six is the number of supposed human perfection; but seven is the number of Divine human perfection - four plus three. Seven hundred and seventy-seven, the age of Lamech who immediately preceded the deluge and the rest which Noah brought in, marvelously typifies the full-orbed perfection of God's purposes and operations which consummate in the next age. Hence, this last book of His revelation is astonishingly the book of sevens.

But here we also find man's number six hundred and sixty-six, the counterfeit of Divine perfection, climaxing man's day of judging - I Corinthians 4:3. It means that depraved man, Satan assisting him of course, will reach the highest point of perfection possible. Political prowess, amassing of wealth, inventions for profit and pleasure, modes and speed of travel, religious attainments and achievements - everything will reach the loftiest pinnacle of human ability. Men are climbing toward the apex today in making implements, planes, and ships of war. The religious bouquets which men will toss at the beast, by which the second beast "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth," will be by far the greatest. It will be by "shewing himself that he is God," that his number will stand out: and that men will be induced to allow the imprint of "the mark of his name" on their hands and foreheads. Instead of giving praise to the true and living God, they will shout, "Glory be to MAN." Concerning the anti-Christ, in whom all these things center and consummate, men will exclaim, "Who is like unto the beast?" - 13:4.

But that will all end in colossal collapse and egregious defeat. God be praised!

THE SEALED ONES OF ISRAEL

Chapter Fourteen

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's Name written in their foreheads" - 14:1. The first five verses of this chapter are a sort of heavenly parenthesis, an apparent interruption of the general program. The Lamb will be the important figure in the glory, because through sacrifice mankind has been redeemed. By faith in Christ's death and resurrection, some are saved and finally will reach the glory. The Lamb is indeed the great figure throughout this whole drama of Revelation. He is the One found worthy to open the book of unfulfilled prophecy and its seals - Revelation 5 and 6.

They overcome the devil "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" - 12:11. The book ends with the Lord God and the Lamb - Revelation 21 and 22.

"Mount Zion" here is the same mount as in Hebrews 12:22. As the earthly Jerusalem was built upon a mountain in Palestine called Zion - a fortress, a monument - so the heavenly Jerusalem, especially as relating to Israel, is called Mount Zion. That will be the eternal fortress for them, of which the earthly Zion is but the reflection. John saw the 144,000 in Heaven. The Voice which he heard was "from Heaven." The song they sung was heard "before the throne," and that throne was in Heaven. It was before the four living ones and the elders, whom we saw in Heaven in chapters four and five. They are also declared to be "without fault before the throne of God" - 14:5.

These 144,000 are the same as those mentioned in chapter seven. There they are called "the servants of our God." There John records their sealing; that is, their anointing with the Holy Spirit as Paul explains in Ephesians 1:13; 4:30. Not only is the Name of the Father written on their foreheads but the Name of the Lamb also, says the Greek. This Divine stamp is what the anti-Christ will seek to imitate by counterfeit in demanding the world to take his name and "the mark of his name." Apparently his devotees will receive an anointing with a spirit; but it will be devilish power. In chapter seven John informs us that their number is 144,000 and that they are all Israelites - 12,000 chosen from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is not a representative number, but the exact number of that company. The exact number of the Bride company is not indicated by figures, except by the dimensions of the holy city - 21:2, 9, 10. She will be "as it were the company of two armies" - Song of Solomon 6:13.

"And they sung as it were a new song before the throne" - 14:3. Who will sing that song? Not the four living ones and twenty-four elders, for it will be sung in their presence. Not the innumerable company of chapter

seven, for "no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand" - 14:3. Why then try to put that song into any mouth other than theirs? In these verses, John tells out the character, destiny, and reward of the 144,000. They cannot be the Bride, as some vainly teach, for they have a lesser place than the four living ones and the twenty-four elders who figure the Bride. They will arrive in Heaven quite a while after the latter will have arrived there.

Immediately upon the setting up of the throne in Heaven a representative group, the four living creatures and twenty-four elders, will be seen there also - Revelation 4. They alone will be present when the Lamb will be declared before the universe to be worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof. Their testimony alone, as full overcomers, will confirm that worthiness.

See Revelation four and five. The 144,000 will not be there until about three years later. See chapter twelve. They will be "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne"; but the 144,000 will be "before the throne" only. The former will sit, and have "on their heads crowns of gold"; but the latter will stand. The Bride of the Lamb will be in closest fellowship with the Bridegroom, moving side by side with Him; but this company are said to "follow the Lamb." Their nearest expressed relationship is with the Lamb "before the throne." The Bride group is "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" - 5:9, 10. But the 144,000 are wholly from the twelve tribes of Israel.

The phrase "Gentile bride" is unscriptural. Likewise, it is just as unscriptural, to suppose that the Bride will be wholly of Israel. By His death, Jesus Christ "hath made both one (Jews and Gentiles)...to make in Himself of twain (Jews and Gentiles) one new man, so making peace" - Ephesians 2:14, 15. That is, He died for all mankind - Jews and Gentiles as one bad lump - that by His resurrection He might bring forth a new creation, a good lump from Jews and Gentiles. Hence, as Paul says further, "Through Him we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father" - Ephesians 2:18. Note the hidden mystery of Christ - "That the Gentiles should be joint heirs (inherit with the Jews), and of a joint-body and joint-partakers of His promise by the Gospel" - Ephesians 3:6. Out of this "joint-body" the Church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, our Lord is selecting a company who shall constitute His spotless and glorious Bride.

The phrase "not defiled with women" is used by some as a slam against the marriage relation, of which God is the Originator. Self-righteousness the result of "will worship" is flaunting farfetched theories on the public continually, based upon some isolated Scripture citation and by wild interpretations entirely out of harmony with the whole tenor of the Word. If this phrase be taken literally, then only women will be in that company and unmarried women at that. Of course, that is simply silly. Just as reasonably may one teach from Ephesians 5:25-33 that only married men and women can be in the Bridehood, which also is foolish.

What then is the meaning here? Plainly this - "woman" is used frequently in the Bible to represent or symbolize a body of religious people. In Isaiah 54: 4-6, Israel is addressed as a widow, Jehovah having been her "Husband." In II Corinthians 11:2, the Church is addressed as "a chaste virgin." In Revelation seventeen, we find a description of "the great harlot" or the Roman Catholic church; and in 2:23 we read of "her children," the so-called Christian churches or denominations.

Therefore, "women" here means religious organizations, not only such as are organized in the letter but also those who have the spirit of sectarianism.

The meaning is that the 144,000 will be separated unto God alone, and hold Christ alone as their Head and as the one only all-sufficient Head of the whole Church. They are a part of the Church. Thus, they also acknowledge other believers as in the Church; though, on account of their carnal walk and ecclesiastical defiling influence, they cannot have perfect fellowship with them. With some of them, they can have no fellowship at all, because they are out of fellowship with God Himself. "If we walk in the light ... we have fellowship" - I John 1:7. Indeed we must "walk in the Spirit," to know always how to treat all of God's people. It is no small item to live separate from men, and yet not be separatists; to move independently of sects and organizations, and still not be sectarian. Christ in us actually, practically, is the only way. Thus, we can be channels of blessings to Church people who are organized and to unorganized bodies who are sectarian, and yet not be defiled by their doctrines and ways. The sentence, "they are virgins," bears the same interpretation. They have no fellowship with unscriptural religious bodies. A virgin figures one who is separated, having only Christ as Head. The time of the fulfillment of 14:1-5 is in immediate connection with chapter twelve. They will be the continuation of events in Heaven while chapter thirteen will be occurring on earth - especially from verse three forward.

GOSPEL AND WARNING

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" - 14:6.

This verse announces good news to all the world. Then follows abruptly an abstract in figurative language of the judgments which are related in detail in chapters fifteen to nineteen. Through swift anointed messengers, God mercifully will give warning of the coming judgments. In previous chapters, we learned that the word "angel" means "a messenger" and usually refers to some Divinely-endowed saint with a heavenly message to this world. The same is true in this case.

Philip was a type of those who will herald the Truth at that time. Dreadful persecutions were rife when he and others "went everywhere preaching the Word" - Acts 8:4. He was borne supernaturally across the country on one trip.

As the woman, the mother of the man child, must be protected and nourished miraculously for three and a half years because of the unspeakable darkness and devilishness of the times (chapter twelve); so must the heralds of glad tidings then be miraculously guided and guarded. The devil will use aeroplanes to transmit his messengers and deadly instruments; and Jehovah must cope with him for the safety of His people. The flying indicates the marvelous speed of such Gospel heralds. "Midst of heaven" corresponds with Jesus' words in Matthew 24:31 - "From one end of heaven to the other." Representatives of Israel will be gathered to Palestine from every place whence they were scattered. "Them that dwell on the earth" evidently refers to professed believers, for here they are distinguished from "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." They will rejoice over the death of the two witnesses - 11:10. Compare also 3:10. Consider the flying angel's message. It is a threefold exhortation on account of impending judgment. The phrase "everlasting Gospel" corresponds with Daniel's announcement of "everlasting righteousness" for his people, which the Messiah will bring in at the beginning of the new age - Daniel 9:24. The nations also that will be saved will enjoy that righteousness. The angel's Gospel will be an offset to that of the false prophet, who will induce the world to go wild over the anti-Christ. He will deserve no worship, no honor. He never created anything but strife and sorrow. Therefore, the entreaty - "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" - 14:7. Thank God! His "elect" will hear and heed the angel's words. "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" - 14:8. This is an epitome statement of what is given in detail in chapter eighteen, the judgment of the false religious system.

"And the third angel followed them," announcing the full and final consequence of rejecting Christ as Savior and King and of accepting the beast instead. Unmerited mercy, when rejected, turns to unmeasured and just hate. Jehovah poured His wrath against sin upon His holy Son once for all on the Cross, who then tasted "death for every man." But they, who prefer Satan's poison and worship his great man and drink in his supposed power by accepting "the mark of his name,"

"shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the Presence of the Lamb" - 14:10, 11.

That refers to the battle of Armageddon (16:14-16), and agrees with Malachi 4:1 - "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." That will be the precursor of the "fire and brimstone" of the lake of fire. Hence, it will be temporary. Though their torment will be forever, yet it will not be in the presence of the saints and of the Lamb forever. The glorified saints with Jesus will behold from Heaven the unspeakable slaughter of that hour; but they will not see the torment of the wicked after they are cast into the lake of fire. "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." But we shall not see it.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" - 14:12. (See notes on 13:7-10). That will be during the reign of anti-Christ, when "Jacob's trouble" - the "great tribulation" - will be on - Matthew 24:21. The Church will have been taken up. Some Jews will have received the word of the "two witnesses" - Revelation 11. Some of these will miraculously escape and endure to the end of that dark period, as Jesus said in Matthew 24:13. Others will be slain by the anti-Christ. In both cases, they will be counted overcomers. Compare 2:26. The patience and faith of those saints, necessary to enable them to stand and withstand in that evil day, will be manifest. The trial of their faith will "be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing (revelation) of Jesus Christ" - I Peter 1:7. Hence, the special word of comfort from Heaven, which John was bidden to write - "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"; that is, they that will be slain at that time. They shall "rest from their labors," which will not be in vain.

JESUS' COMING SYMBOLIZED

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle" - 14:14. The "white cloud" is the host of glorified believers associated with Jesus when He will be revealed from Heaven. The "sharp sickle" is His instrument of scathing judgment. Indeed, the last seven verses of this concise chapter are a graphic pen-picture of the finale of the judgment scenes.

The voice of "another angel," calling upon the Lord to thrust in His sickle, expresses the absolute sympathy and unflinching agreement of the saints in Heaven with Him in judging the world. "The harvest of the earth" speaks especially of the judgment of the world by wars and plagues, etc., fulfilling Isaiah 63:1-6 and Joel 3:13, 14. "The clusters of the vine of the earth" speaks particularly of Catholicism. The house of Israel was called the "vine" or "vineyard" - Isaiah 5:1-7. The Catholic church is in a similar relation to God as was Israel. She claims to be God's Church; but, she divorced herself from Him, even as did Israel. The gathering of the vine of the earth is given in detail in chapter eighteen; that is, the judgment of the great harlot.

Finally, "the great winepress of the wrath of God ... trodden without the city" means the most terrible battle of all ages - Armageddon. World Wars I and II were an earnest of it and a preparation for it. The world has been ripening rapidly ever since for the final conflict. The cup of iniquity is about full. By that means, God will "sit to judge all the heathen (nations) round about" - Joel 3:12. Jerusalem and the Holy Land will suffer untold chastisement because of that terrible carnage. Her wail will be, "The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me" - Lamentations 1:12-17. The valley of Megiddo, or Jehoshaphat, will be the battlefield. So many will be the warriors from various nations, so unsparing will be the mad slaughter, and so deadly and powerful and sweeping will be the instruments of war, that blood will flow freely for a circuit of about two hundred miles.

We praise Thee, O Jehovah! Our banner gladly raise. Jehovah-Nissi! Rally us For conflict, victory, praise.

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

Chapter Fifteen

"And I saw another sign in Heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" - 15:1. The phrase "another sign" refers back to chapter twelve where we read of the sign woman, the sign child, and the dragon. This sign is not only great but marvelous, because the plagues are the belching forth of the fullness of Divine fury upon a Christ-rejecting world. Wrath "filled up" is in contrast with unstinted and abounding mercy poured out during the past two thousand years.

The number "seven" is a representative number, which here is the final declaration of dispensational fullness and completeness. "Seven last plagues" speak of the full measure of just judgment upon men. "Last plagues" implies former plagues, of which we read in chapter nine.

The judgments begin in chapter eight. The word "plagues" indicates the nature of the judgments. Rejection of accumulated mercy deserves accumulated fury from the hand of Divine justice. Men deliberately turn from the ocean of God's love and choose instead the lake of fire. Men "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" - Romans 1:32. This is almost unbelievable, but it is taking place daily before our eyes. The phrase "seven angels" includes all the saints who fully judged the world during their lives, and will stand in full sympathy and cooperation with the Lord in judging the world at the end.

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" - 15:2. In 4:6 we saw "before the throne a sea of glass like unto crystal." That reminded us of "the laver of regeneration" - Titus 3:5. The phrase here, "mingled with fire," points back to the unwordable fiery tribulation during which those victors will have obtained cleansing in that laver before they can ascend to Heaven. Peter speaks of that coming fiery trial - I Peter 1:7.

Exactly who are they that shall "stand on the sea of glass" in victory? Doubtless, they are the souls under the altar (6:9-11) and those of 13:7, 15; 14:13. "The remnant of her seed" refers to these - 12:17. The two witnesses of chapter eleven may be of those "fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were" - 6:11. Therefore, they will be among the great throng of chapter nineteen; for they count not their lives dear unto themselves. To recant rather than die is shameful defeat; but to die rather than recant, though it seems like defeat, is glorious victory.

Christ died in apparent defeat at the cruel hands of His foes; but, in so doing, He annulled "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" - Hebrews 2:14. Jesus conquered and slew Satan with his own weapon.

Those seen standing on the "sea of glass" are the last to arrive in Heaven. By their being resurrected, the heavenly company will be completed. "His heavenly Kingdom" will be full - II Timothy 4:18. What a glorious Kingdom!

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" - 15:3. The song of Moses is found in Exodus fifteen. The gist of it is given in verse eleven - "Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Likewise, those victors over the beast will extol the greatness, the justice, and the worthiness of the Lord. Their song is also prophetic of His future and eternal triumph, addressing Him as "King of saints" and adding - "All nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest" - 15:3, 4. Hence, the song they sing is indeed "the song of the Lamb." Note verse five. Moses was instructed to build "the tabernacle of testimony" in the wilderness - Exodus 25:8. That, however, was only a perishable shadow of "the true tabernacle" in Heaven of which John here speaks - Hebrews 8:2.

Revelation 21:3 explains that the tabernacle includes all the glorified saints then in Heaven.

At the close of the Millennial reign, it will be said, "The tabernacle of God is with men" - 21:3. For the holy city, surrounded with walls great and high, will come down out of Heaven. They will be in Heaven for a thousand years as the witness of the results of redemption to all the universe. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple" - 21:22. In 11:19 we saw "in His temple the ark of His testament." The Lamb is the ark, which speaks of salvation by sacrifice. The temple speaks of worship.

"The seven angels came out of the temple" - 15:6. The angels or messengers in the temple indicate the priestly function that some saints will have in close fellowship with Jesus as High Priest, because they fill that place on earth now. Coming out of the temple "having the seven plagues" shows their authority and cooperation with Christ to inflict the judgments which have been impending ever since His death for sinful man on the Cross. Infinite love did its utmost to save men, the priests the meanwhile interceding for them. Then rejected mercy will take just vengeance upon men. The priestly character of the seven angels is further expressed by their raiment - "clothed in pure and white linen" - similar to the Lord Himself - 1:13. These cannot refer to angels, but to redeemed men. "The four living ones" are not a different company from "the seven angels." They are one and the same group. The former is especially expressive of the character of them all; the latter is expressive of them officially. The one instructs the others, something like one minister speaks to other ministers in the same company.

"And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power" - 15:8. The smoke here indicates Divine wrath about to be poured out, as in Psalm 18:8 - "There went up a smoke out of His nostrils." The angels come out of the temple, "having their breasts girded with golden girdles" - 15:6. That is, they show no mercy but come forth to execute unstinted judgment, even as does the Candlestick Examiner move about in judging Christendom "girt about the paps with a golden girdle" - 1:13.

Likewise, no one can come into God's Presence as an intercessor in behalf of a Christ-rejecting world at that time. The cup of iniquity will be filled to the brim. Upon men who refuse unlimited grace, the hour of unlimited Divine fury must break forth. The bleeding Lamb will become a roaring lion dashing forth upon His prey. Study Genesis 49:9 and Isaiah 31:4 with Revelation 5:5.

Then will prayers like Psalm 7:6 be answered - "Arise, O Lord, in Thine anger, lift up Thyself because of the rage of mine enemies; and awake for me to the judgment that Thou hast commanded."

My friends, how terrible is God's righteous wrath against sin and transgression, that He should give John a flashlight of it twenty centuries ago. On the other hand, how powerful was Christ's death to satisfy justice and how prevailing His high priestly intervention ("Father, forgive them") in restraining offended justice so many hundreds of years. How little we enter into the solemnity of these awful things. As we meditate, we are moved to exclaim with Miriam, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea" - Exodus 15:21. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" - Psalm 107:2.

PERHAPS TODAY!

*"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,
and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"*
- John 14:3.

Perhaps today my Lord will come,

And take me to His own bright Home.
Before the breakfast has been made,
Perhaps before the table's laid
I'll hear Him call - "My child, I come."
And in an instant I'll be gone.
Perhaps the dinner may be past,
The children off to school at last;
And I sit down to read the Word,
Or consider some message I have heard.
My head, perhaps, be bowed in prayer;
But in a twinkling I am there.
Perhaps it may be eventide,
With all my duties laid aside;
The children fast asleep in bed -
Their faces washed, their prayers all said.
Then we two kneel before the Throne -
One moment here - another gone.
Oh, Saviour, Lord, do quickly come;
Our hearts are aching to be Home.
We long to see Thee as Thou art,
And love Thee with unsinning heart.
But, if Thou should'st not come today,
May we still watch and work and pray.

WRATH POURED OUT - Chapter Sixteen

"And I heard a great Voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth" 16:1. At different times and in various places, God has shown His displeasure against the wicked by means of judgments of various kinds.

Those were earnestings of these final blasts of Divine fury. As wickedness has increased, calamities have also increased. For example, earthquakes are far more frequent and widespread the last hundred years than before. Grievous sores, incurable diseases, horrible plagues, blistering heat, indescribable earthquakes, not only here and there but everywhere, will be important parts of the dark program. These will be the aggravated, accumulated, intoxicating "fury of God, which is mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath" - 14:10. Jeremiah was commanded - "Take the wine cup of this fury at My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them" - Jeremiah 25:15, 16.

The visitations of wrath recorded in chapter sixteen are the culmination of those in chapter eight which will commence some time before the reign of anti-Christ. They will spread and increase in terribleness as "the hour of His judgment" proceeds (about three and a half years) - 14:7. In his vision, it seemed to John that the plagues were emptied out of great bowls. According to

Jeremiah 25:16 the chief instrument will be the sword; that is, war always results in devastation, famine, poverty, deadly diseases, and plagues.

The time of those visitations of wrath will be the period of the reign of anti-Christ; for they will begin to be inflicted on the men that have "the mark of the beast" and them which worship his image. They will succeed one another, the first preparing the way for the second, etc.; and each becoming more dreadful than the preceding.

"The first went, and poured out his vial (bowl) upon the earth" or land which, no doubt, will be more local - confined especially to Palestine and vicinity. "A noisome and grievous sore," which will be akin to those inflicted on Egypt under Moses' ministry.

"The second angel poured out his vial upon the sea," which refers to the nations, and will be more widespread. "And it became as the blood of a dead man." The same is said of "the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood." Moses smote the waters, "and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood" - Exodus 7:17, 20. The ravages of war will be so terrible that, in the vision, the nations seemed like a sea of blood and death stalked on every hand. "The rivers and fountains of waters," which ought to minister blessings, speak of religious bodies that propagate error. God's curse will fall upon them

also, according to their deserving's.

"And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus" - 16:5. "The angel of the waters" is simply the third angel that poured out his bowl. He bursts forth in bold terms, justifying Jehovah in all His acts of vengeance. Verse six is positive proof that "the rivers and fountains of waters" are false teachers - "For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy"; that is, they deserve to be slain by the sword.

Calvary confirms the angel's witness of God's righteousness - "And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" - 16:7. Men will arise and condemn the Lord, even as they do today, saying, "God is not just. Why does He thus punish the people?" Hence, the ejaculations of defending His character and justifying His conduct, interspersed here and there. The refusal of men to repent is further proof of God's justice in judging them. Compare 16:9, 11 with 9:20, 21 and 11:10, 18 and 13:3, 4.

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire" - 16:8. The sun will shine with unparalleled strength. Sunstrokes will mow people down like some deadly epidemic. The heat will be so unbearably intense that it will evoke vociferous blasphemies from unrepentant men. Who can point out the great revival that Bible teachers vainly declare will come during that awful time of judgment? "They repented not" is everywhere - the sequel of God's visitations of wrath. Therefore, there is no restraint thereof; but they grow in severity, and climax in the battle of Armageddon.

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain" - 16:10. The judgment plagues in their most aggravated form will culminate upon the headquarters of wickedness. Doubtless, the "noisome and grievous sore" of verse two, the turning water-to-blood plague of verses three and four, and the sun-scorching plague of verses eight and nine will fall together upon the throne of the beast.

No one can conceive adequately the terribleness of those days. International conflicts will be increasing rapidly. The devastating effects of war will be beyond description. The smoke of battle will obscure the light of the sun by day. Electric wires will be severed, leaving whole cities in dense darkness by night.

"The land was darkened" in Egypt by a great swarm of locusts, which typified the armies of men which will gather in Palestine - Joel 2. That was followed by "darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt" - Exodus 10:21. That was simply an earnest of the widespread night that will envelope the people then. National gloom, confusion, and distress will seize hold of and bewilder peoples and kings. Battle diplomacy will turn mad. The "peace and safety" compact will end in a colossal panic. Jesus gave a pen-picture of those days, in Luke 21:25, 26. Read it carefully and consider. The next verse proves that these things will come to pass in those days.

"And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud (glorified saints) with power and great glory" - Luke 21:27. Hallelujah! "Lord, haste the day." He surely will.

That will also be the climax of spiritual night. False prophets, under the devil-inspired leadership of the second beast - "the false prophet" - will employ accumulated error and proclaim it as the true light; but it will prove to be the darkness. That darkness will be an earnest of the "outer darkness", the eternal state of the unrepentant. What a contrast to "the Kingdom of His (God's) dear Son" - the Kingdom of dazzling light and sparkling splendor. For God dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto" - I Timothy 6:16. The Holy Spirit, in other Scriptures, pictures the density of the darkness that will envelope the world then.

Think of it - he who was called "Lucifer (day star), son of the morning" will fill the world with darkness and night - Isaiah 14:12. He who was "full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty," covered with "every precious stone," the embodiment of dazzling brightness, and "walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (the throne room of Jehovah) - he who was in himself a charming orchestra of tabrets and pipes - became lifted up and said, "I will be like the Most High." But, instead, he comes to be the lowest; and engulfs humanity in bewildering self-destructive darkness. "They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores" - 16:10, 11. They will be deceived religiously, blind mentally, distressed socially and nationally, insane with gloom, and wild with confusion. They will blame God for it all - the God who is holy, just, and true, and who has showed mercy to all for two thousand years.

Do you ask, "Where will be the throne of the beast?" We know that Rome was the seat of the last of the four great world empires. The end-time world empire must be the feet and toes of that great image of Daniel 2:31-45. "The prince that shall come" (Daniel 9:26) - that is, the final world ruler - must be of the Roman

Empire. "The people of the prince that shall come," devastated Jerusalem in 71 A.D. By carefully reading Jeremiah twenty-five and fifty-one with Revelation seventeen and eighteen, we see clearly that Rome is the religious mistress of the world. Present unfolding facts sustain this view, and surely indicate that the revived Roman Empire will again rule the world. This does not seem possible nor even probable now, but radical events may change overnight. If the anti-Christ chooses another site for his throne, it will certainly be in the West; for the race has been moving westward. The fact that "tidings out of the East and out of the North shall trouble" the united world powers congregated in Palestine and the fact that "the kings of the East" will come forth to the battle of Armageddon (16:12), unite to suggest at least the direction of the universal throne. "And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him" - Daniel 11:45.

This refers to the anti-Christ who will, doubtless, transfer to Jerusalem his religious headquarters. Compare II Thessalonians 2:4.

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared" - 16:12. The literal river Euphrates would be a small barrier against armies today. Rather this is the meaning: Inasmuch as the Euphrates was set as the boundary of Israel (Genesis 15:18) and Israel's foes came from the East (Isaiah 8:7; Jeremiah 46:10), the Divine restraint will then be removed for the eastern armies to come up to the final world war; for God has said, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" - Zechariah 14:2.

The place or battleground is Megiddo, about one hundred miles north from Jerusalem. The word "Armageddon" means "war chariot of Megiddo." The valley of Megiddo is also called the valley of Jezreel, "it will be sown of God"; and the valley of Jehoshaphat, "Jehovah is Judge." That valley is famous in Bible history for battles fought and victories won. Study Deborah's song of triumph over Sisera. "The kings came and fought ... the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" - Judges 5:19, 20. The careers of Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel were in that vicinity. See I Kings eighteen and twenty-two. All the great engagements fought in that valley are shadows of the final conflict of the nations. See Joel three. With 16:13, 14 compare I Kings 22:21, 22. God permitted a lying spirit in the mouths of false prophets to persuade Ahab to go up to battle that he might be slain.

Likewise, He will employ miracle-working demons to induce kings and people to go up to the final siege. At the beginning of that awful judgment, God will send upon the impenitent "strong delusion, that they should believe the lie" (that the anti-Christ is the Christ). "That they all might be damned (judged) who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," "because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved" - II Thessalonians 2:10-12.

Those evil spirits will not appear unclean and frog-like in man's sight. The prophets whom they will possess and move will be polite and winning, wise and eloquent, religious and refined. They will confirm their pious utterances by "working miracles." But the Holy Spirit pronounces them "spirits of demons," "unclean spirits like frogs"; that is, to God those prophets are slimy ministers of darkness. Their fair speeches are but croakings - blatant, impudent impotents, cheap orators. Those foul lying spirits will control all the prophets who before were false to the Truth of God, yet claimed to be His ministers. They will move men irresistibly everywhere by their eloquence and miracles to hasten to the scene of battle. Quite likely they will publish the miracles wrought by the false prophet and the image of the beast (Revelation 13), and endeavor to gather men from all the world to behold that wicked wonder in the temple - the image of the beast, "the abomination that maketh desolate" - Daniel 11:31.

Note the combined triune power of Satan. First: the dragon, or the devil himself. Second: the national power, the beast, representing the nations. Third: the religious power, the false prophet, representing apostatized Jews and professed Christians. Oh, the unspeakable terribleness, the physical and spiritual darkness, of those days. It will seem as though Jehovah were dethroned.

ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE

"Behold, I come as a thief Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" - 16:15. This is a clear commentary on Matthew 24:43 and Luke 12:39, 40 and II Peter 3:10. These citations refer to the revelation of Jesus from Heaven, the Church being revealed with Him. As thieves come in the night, so Jesus will appear in the night of the tribulation which He will shorten by overthrowing the anti-Christ and the false prophet. Who is the "blessed" mentioned here? It is "he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end" (2:26); "he that shall endure unto the end" (of the tribulation), "the same shall be saved" from physical death - Matthew 24:13. Inasmuch as God will have completed the Body of Christ - the Church - three years prior and will then be dealing with Israel only; those

will be counted as Israel. All believers on earth at that time will be Kingdom believers, and not counted in the Church in any sense. Daniel 12:12 speaks of the same blessed one saying, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." Compare Isaiah 25:9 and Zechariah 14:16. "The great and notable day" (Joel 2:31), a brief period during the "Day of the Lord," covers seventy-five days extending from the destruction of the beasts unto the direct revelation of Christ to Israel when they will exclaim - "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" - Isaiah 25:9. Zechariah 14:7 declares that - "it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light" - similar to twilight.

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of Heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done" - 16:17. When Jesus Christ was hanging on the Cross counted sin for us, He cried out, "It is finished." What was finished? The judgment due to all men, for their sins had fallen upon the holy Son of God. There remained no more judgment for all those who had believed and who should believe on Jesus. But the masses do not believe. For them there is a judgment to come, because they refuse the judgment which fell on God's Son in their behalf. Of this we had an intimation in 10:7.

At that time, "the mystery of God should be finished," and it will be so announced from the throne.

The revelation of Jesus Christ from Heaven and the overthrow of the beast and false prophet in the battle of Armageddon will be the finish of the mystery. After the Millennium will be the final judgment at which time the wicked dead will be judged. Then again it will be announced - "it is done" - 21:6.

The voices of 16:18 are the judgment utterances of the redeemed who stand in perfect accord with God in His just retributions upon men for rejecting the Gospel of His grace. Their anthem of agreement with Jehovah is recorded in Psalm 145:17 and Revelation 15:3, 4 and 19:2 - "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." "True and righteous are His judgments." As there was a convulsion in the natural world when Christ was crucified, because God turned His face in holy abhorrence from the face of His Anointed for He was then made sin for us (Matthew 27:45), so here all nature arises in tremendous triumphant agreement with God the Almighty in His visitations of wrath. Hence, the thunders and lightnings and earthquakes.

There have been great upheavals in divers places at different times; but that final upheaval will far exceed them all. It will not be local. For here we are told that, "the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell," as a result of "so mighty an earthquake, and so great" - 16:18, 19. It will go rumbling, roaring, and wrenching from city to city. Oh, what dreadful devastations! How terrible are the judgments of the Almighty. Think of it! "Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" - 16:20.

What city will be divided into three parts? Babylon, no doubt, is meant. In 14:8 and in 18:2

Babylon is called "the great city," even as in 16:19 here. The cities of the nations also will fall at that time. Special reference is made to Babylon - "to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath" - 16:19. The city of which a tenth part will fall is Jerusalem, the center of the ministry of the two witnesses - 11:13. Observe that the earthquake of 16:18, 19 will be much greater than the one of 11:13. So the cities are not the same.

GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL

L. Darlene Mitchell

You who created the earth and sky
And filled them to overflowing,
Who made each star twinkle and each bird fly -
How is it you're mindful of one such as I?
You can move your hand and paint a horizon,
You clothe the mountains with purest snow.
You make the sun shine fiery bright,
Yet I am never out of Your sight.
You watched the circles that I ran,
Yet Your love was always reaching out.
You set me free and now I stand
Secure, upheld by your right hand.
And You remind me:
When worry tends to freeze the mind,

And causes the soul to tremble;
 Remember that for every second of time -
 GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.
 When ivory towers fall apart,
 And crumble in silence to the ground;
 Remember not to let tears start -
 GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.
 When doubts and fears begin to assail,
 And solution plays the joker;
 Remember the one who will never fail -
 GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.
 And when the clearing is all around,
 And the sun shines warm upon you;
 Remember that you were lost then found -
 GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.
 (Sent in by Katherine Peavy)

THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON **Chapter Seventeen**

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials (bowls), and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters" - 17:1. This is another phase of the judgment scenes of chapter sixteen, and will occur at the same time. That angel represents the redeemed company of 17:14 - "called, and chosen, and faithful."

John's vision viewpoint was "the wilderness" - 17:3. That is, he saw the visitations of Divine wrath upon "the mother of harlots" as related to the whole world. She "sitteth upon many waters"; that is, "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" - 17:15. This is the Babylon of 14:8; 16:19; 17:18. As "the great city," the woman is Rome, situated upon seven hills. But those "seven mountains" are also said to be "seven heads" on a beast - 17:3, 7; 13:1.

Those "seven heads" are represented by "seven kings" - 17:9, 10. The people are figured by "many waters" - 17:1, 15. The national foe of Jerusalem is called a "great mountain" - Zechariah 4:7. (Also, God's Kingdom on earth is termed "a great mountain" - Daniel 2:35). Evidently this is the meaning: Seven nations called seven mountains - composed of multitudes of people of various languages - will comprise one grand empire called "the beast," of which the city of Rome may be the capital. Religious Rome is mistress of the world. Her hand is the prevailing ladle in the international pot.

The Roman Catholic church is termed "Jezebel," which means "without cohabitation" - 2:20. Her prelates pretend to live in celibacy; yet Jezebel's children are many, and she boasts of her numbers. The membership of the Catholic church in Canada and the United States is nearly as many as all the other denominations together. Jezebel calls herself "a prophetess." The church claims to be the teacher, ignoring the Holy Spirit. Study the title which John saw on her head - "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" - 17:5

In the Scriptures, cities are likened to women only when viewed religiously. Hence, that city cannot mean Babylon in Assyria. Compare "Aholah" which figures Samaria, "Aholibah"

Jerusalem, and "Hephzibah" Jerusalem - Ezekiel 23:4; Isaiah 62:4, 5. Note how Jeremiah 51:13 agrees with Revelation 17:15. Ancient Babylon did not dwell upon many waters but upon one water, the Euphrates. Observe also how Jeremiah 51:45 agrees with Revelation 18:4. Behold the similarity of the destiny of Babylon as described by Jeremiah 51:62-64 and in Revelation 18:21.

"With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" - 17:2. The Church is a spiritual Body of people. She cannot have fellowship with a nation. The union of Church and state is entirely unscriptural. The state is of this world. The Church is from Heaven.

Constantine was the first emperor to take the Church under protection, because he saw that it would be to his advantage, about 300 A.D. Church and state entered into mutual fellowship. God calls that "fornication." Therefore, spirituality was supplanted by formality. Formal religion, which eases a guilty conscience, appeals to statesmen who become carried away with it - drunk with "the wine of her fornication," even "the wine of the wrath of her fornication" - 17:2; 18:3. People and statesmen of "all nations" have, gone

religiously mad, because of the intoxicating effects of Rome's teaching that the Church is the Kingdom of God and that she must convert the world before Christ can come back to the earth to reign. "The whole lump" (the mass of religious humanity) is leavened with this anti-Christian heresy - Galatians 5:9.

FOURTH VISION VIEWPOINT

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns" - 17:3. That was John's fourth vision viewpoint. The wilderness simply means the world where the nations operate. The coming world empire will be beastly; that is, unlike God, without a thought of God and without reason. It will be scarlet; that is, bloodthirsty, warlike. And yet, its chief ruler will claim Divine titles "shewing himself that he is God," and many other names will he assume - "full of names" which the Lord terms "names of blasphemy." We have already noted that "the seven heads" are seven great nations which compose the world empire. (See chapter thirteen).

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" - 17:4. Understand that by this vision God gave John an exact photograph of the nations and the relation of the Roman Catholic church to them, then the imagery becomes plain.

Her colors and adornments are further proof of the woman's identity, for they are worn by the pope and his associates. By visiting any Catholic cathedral you will see these colors and gildings in grand display. Rome bears the appearance of religious royalty, "purple," claiming to reign "as kings" now (I Corinthians 4:8) - of heavenly perfection, "gold and precious stones and pearls."

She pretends to nourish the needy and hungry - "a golden cup in her hand." But Divine justice, indignant at her blasphemous claims, pronounces the contents of that cup abominable and filthy. Hence, her consequent punishment is pending.

"And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" - 17:5. Christ and His Body, the true Church, are a great part of "the mystery of godliness." But the church of Rome is the essential figure in "the mystery of iniquity." That is why she is called "Babylon the great." The depths of this mystery are called "the depths of Satan" - 2:24.

The origin and meaning of the word will help us greatly. "Babylon" means "confusion, gate of Bel." "Babylon" is the Greek mode of spelling what, in the Hebrew, is uniformly "Babel." Perhaps when Nimrod founded the city he gave it the name "Babil," "gate of Il," or "gate of God." After the confusion of tongues the name was connected by the Hebrews with the root "Babal," "to confound" - Young's Concordance. Indeed, Rome claims to be the gate of God; that is, the means of God getting to man. But Jehovah names her "confusion"; and by her toil and teaching she spreads confusion worldwide. It is no longer a secret that Rome exerts far greater religious power over the nations and people than any other organized body of people. But God terms all that influence "confusion."

We are considering a very comprehensive verse. Who are the harlot daughters? Spirit-taught Bible readers agree that they are the Protestant denominations. The writer was certainly amazed to read substantially the following in a Seventh Day Adventist paper. First the editor stated that his denomination was the true Church and all other denominations were the harlot daughters.

The Catholic church, of course, he said is the mother. Then he quoted from half a dozen leading denominational periodicals. All of them pronounced the Catholic church "the mother of harlots." Each one declared his denomination to be the true Church, and all others to be daughters of the great harlot mother. Had the Advent editor been bright, he would not have published those statements. He did not realize that he was thus proving his sect also to be a harlot. Every organization, every sect, whether organized or not that claims to be the Church thus makes itself a harlot daughter of Rome. The real Church of God is a spiritual Body. It is so constituted by individuals being joined unto the Church by the Lord Himself, even "joined unto the Lord" - Acts 2:47; 5:14; 11:24; I Corinthians 6:17.

Does my reader object to calling religious organizations the "harlots"? If you do, it is because you do not know the Scriptures nor do you understand Christendom as God sees it. Will the objector explain the deepening fellowship which obtains between Catholicism and Protestantism? Why are Catholic priests accorded an equal place with others at monthly and weekly ministerial meetings?

Why are influential preachers saying that the Roman Catholic church should be recognized?

Explain, please, how a world-famed evangelist over forty years ago could preach Jesus Christ and the new birth and Jesus' coming in one breath; and in the next advise his hearers to attend mass and join the

Catholic church, and hundreds accepted his counsel. God says, "Come out of her." That fellow said, "Join her." At the World's Fair in Chicago, Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Mohammedans, were assembled on the same platform exhibiting their religious wares; and that was hailed as a great victory for Christianity. That is a common occurrence today.

Again, I remark that this is an amazing verse. The woman in question is "the mother of harlots." As the mother claims to be the Bride of Christ, but is proving herself false by running after other lovers; likewise, her daughters are flirting with the world, yet all the while claiming to be the Spouse of Christ. Oh, the infinitude of Divine mercy and forbearance that patiently puts up with it all!

Then follows the still more solemn statement, the same woman is "the mother of...abominations of the earth." Idolatry, that is, worshiping idols instead of God is the great abomination in the sight of God. Circumcision was a "sign" and "seal" to Abraham of his faith, so also to his descendants.

But the Jews afterward made it the necessary means of salvation; that is, a savior. Thus, it became an abomination.

The serpent on the pole was typically the means of Israel's deliverance, because it pointed them to Christ's death on the Cross. But, afterward, they made it an abomination by worshiping it instead of the Redeemer whom it typified - II Kings 18:4. See Numbers 21:9 and John 3:14 and marvel. Catholics exalt creature things which, in God's sight, they worship. They bow reverently before lifeless statues of Jesus and "holy Mary," as they call her. They adore the church, idolize the priests, and worship the pope. All this is abomination to God. Then the world has become filled with those who copy Rome by introducing varying shades of idolatry, turning people away from Jesus Christ Himself who alone is the Savior and Keeper. The abominations are legion. I tell you that anything that people put above or ahead of Jesus is abomination, whether creed, or church, or man, or form of worship, or rules, or gifts, or days - all are abominations before God."

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus - 17:6. Was that ever true of ancient Babylon? By no means. But, it has been most horribly true of the Catholic church, as history assures us. She maintains the same spirit of hatred against real saints of God to this day. None know this so well as those who have escaped from the hidden recesses of the dark system and come forth in the glorious light and liberty of the sons of God. Protestants are following in their mother's steps.

THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST

"I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns" - 17:7. We must hold in mind the exact point from which John is viewing this scene. Verse eight shows that he is standing within the three days during which the one head, or ruler, is in death. He sees the seven-headed empire, or "many waters," and the woman sitting thereon. The fornication and drunkenness of the nations and the drunkenness of the woman with the blood of saints and martyrs, all happen before John sees her; that is, during the past nineteen centuries. See 17:2, 4, 6. Hence, he is giving us in these two chapters (17 and 18), the Divine view of the woman especially during the week of consummations and her terrible and just doom. What is told in one word in 2:22 is told out here in detail.

In 17:8 "the beast that thou sawest" (13:1, 2) "was" at the beginning of the seven years. "Is not" refers to the death of one of the heads, or kings - 13:3, 12. He will be dead probably three days, because he will base his claim to be king upon the fact of being raised from the dead as the counterfeit of the Christ - Compare Romans 1:4. This same one "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit." He will reign forty-two months (13:5), then "go into perdition" - 17:8; 19:20. During his reign, the Christ-rejecters "shall wonder" after him and worship him as God, when they behold him killed and alive again so soon.

Verse ten helps us greatly here. "There are seven kings," when the seven years begin, which will rule over their respective mountains or nations. These seven comprise the empire. "Five are fallen"; that is, when John stands beholding the woman sitting on the beast, the angel tells him that five of them have been dethroned some time during the first half of the

KINGDOM OF THE WILD BEAST

"For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" - 17:17. What an amazing statement! God is back of all that happens with the nations. He will use the ten kings and the beast to punish apostate Christendom. This corresponds with Romans 9:17, 18. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain" - Psalm 76:10

Revelation 16:14, 16 indicates that Satan will gather the nations for the battle of Armageddon. But Joel 3:2 and Zechariah 14:2 show that God Himself does it. No matter what is in man's mind, he cannot act till

Jehovah is ready. For years, men have tried to form the "peace and safety" league; but their efforts are futile. When God's "due time" arrives, with mighty authority they will proclaim, "Peace and safety"; but not till then. The nations endeavor to avert war; but, when "the Lord God of Israel" shall speak, war will wage - "And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them" - Jeremiah 25:15, 16. God is behind all His providences, and wants us to see His hand everywhere and justify Him in all things.

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" - 17:18. "That great city" is Papal Rome. "Has kingship" certainly expresses her hidden power over the rulers of the world. This cannot possibly be Jerusalem, as some suggest. Jerusalem will be in the throes of tribulation at that time, and not in control of the nations. This is none other than the city whose overthrow is foretold in 14:8 - "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." The next chapter delineates her downfall.

THE COMING OF JESUS

"And He which testifieth these things saith, SURELY I COME QUICKLY!" Rev. 22:20.

Jesus is coming! O lift up the trumpet!
Sound the glad tidings o'er hillside and plain,
Tell to the nations that wander in darkness:
Jesus the Saviour is coming again!
Jesus is coming! O message of gladness!
Mourner in Zion look up and rejoice!
He will appoint thee a place in His Kingdom,
Thou shalt be glad at the sound of His voice.
Jesus is coming! and all shall behold Him!
None can escape in that terrible hour;
O ye that reject Him, say how will you meet Him,
When He shall appear in His glory and power?
Jesus is coming! all nations to conquer,
All nations shall bow, His dominion to own;
His scepter shall sway from the least to the greatest,
So shall He forever establish His throne.

BABYLON IS FALLEN

Chapter Eighteen

"And after these things I saw another Angel come down from Heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with His glory" - 18:1. This "Angel" is none other than the Lord Jesus taking control of the judgment of the harlot. We saw the same grand Personage in chapter ten.

Compare Ezekiel 43:2-6. First, He announces the fall of the greatest religious system in the world, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" - 18:2. He tells what will happen as if it had already happened. She has been for centuries a stronghold for demons and unclean birds. Birds mean heavenly messengers. Unclean birds figure false messengers, though claiming to be true. "Come out of her, My people." Note that God does not recognize Christendom as His Church. He calls her "Babylon," "confusion." For many years, He has been calling His people out of sectarianism unto Himself alone. That will be His final call to come out. "She saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" - 18:7.

Christendom hopes to be the Bride of Christ. She does not realize her sad divorcement from Jehovah, and does not see her certain doom. She who boasts of the highest place with God - claims the greatest sainthood - announces herself to be the only instructor in Divine things, and the true witness of Jesus Christ. This one shall receive the most terrible doom, because "her sins have reached unto Heaven" so enormous have they become. She shall be rewarded "double according to her works" - 18:5, 6.

Pay her back. "So much torment and sorrow" shall she have, even "plagues ... death, and mourning, and famine." The greatness of Babylon's iniquities in God's sight is indicated by the number of references to them and to the manner of her utter destruction. The many prophecies of Babylon's overthrow, recorded by Isaiah and Jeremiah, will have their final fulfillment in the judgment of the great harlot.

The heinousness of the sin of Babylon is known to God alone. We cannot picture it. That a body of people

should declare themselves to be God's own and spiritual, yet actually barter in all the most costly articles of commerce (about thirty named in 18:12, 13) and enrich themselves thereby - this is an exceeding abomination to God. In the Vatican in Rome are found the most costly gems of art. Fabulous treasures of wealth are laid up there, even as John informs us - "gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble." But what does a real saint care for all that outward veneer? We are looking "for a city ... whose Builder and Maker is God" - the real city of real gold – Hebrews 11:10. Instead of liberating men, Rome profiteers with the bodies and lives of men enriching herself by sending people to hell.

The final declaration of her crime is given in 18:24 - "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." "Fox's Book of Martyrs" records the fulfillment in measure of this statement. Thus her outward commercialism symbolizes her making "merchandise" of the Gospel.

Do you wonder at the twentieth verse? "Rejoice over her, thou Heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." The judgment of the false claimant to the Bridehood of Christ must come before the glorious wedding in the air can take place. As the beast will be the rival of our Lord for the throne of universal empire, so sectarianism will be the rival of the true Bride of Christ. The unspeakable triumph of the overthrow of both is recorded in the next chapter.

NAIL-PIERCED HANDS

Mary M. Bodie

He lifted up those holy hands,
That once had toiled with men.
Those hands that served to loose the bands
By which Satan fettered them.
He lifted up those holy hands
Midst His disciples true.
They looked upon those cruel brands -
Sin's payment - all their due.
He lifted up those holy hands
That tore away death's bars.
And they were glad to understand
And touch those memory scars.
He lifted up those holy hands,
Those righteous hands so scarred.
They gazed on them at His command.
Their beauty was not marred.
He lifted up those holy hands,
As He went up above.
He's waiting there on crystal strand,
With heart that's full of love.

THE WEDDING IN HEAVEN

Chapter Nineteen

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God" - 19:1. In this chapter we read of two suppers and of two armies and of two triumphs. It begins with a shout of triumph over religious foes, and ends with victory over national foes. The "much people" here are some of the glorified saints of whom we read in the preceding chapters. We should suppose at least that those who stand in triumph on the "sea of glass" (15:2) and all who have suffered persecution at the hands of Babylon (18:24) will be in that company. These unite in one grand anthem of triumph which begins and ends with "Alleluia!" This is the first time we read the word "Alleluia" in this book. It is the highest, the sublimest, expression of praise. It will be the great note of the full triumph of the Christ and of His Church, immediately after the complete overthrow of apostatized ecclesiasticism and before the marriage of the Lamb.

Here is a very important item. Before the wedding can take place in Heaven, the harlot church must be judged; for she claims to be the Bride of Christ. Her claims must be proven false, by being "weighed in the

balances" (of God's invincible Word) and "found wanting." The unspeakable stench in the Divine nostrils is this, that "the great whore ... did corrupt the earth with her fornication," as stated in detail in chapters seventeen and eighteen. The religious system which pretends to purify and ennoble humanity is the one chiefly charged with corrupting it. Note that the judgment of the world is not even mentioned in this final anthem of victory. And why? Because the woman leavened the whole lump - Matthew 13:33. God blames Catholicism for the corrupt and abominable conditions in church and state. See again 17:2, 4, and 6. Therefore, the essence of that song of victory will be that of justifying the Lord God for destroying the great harlot.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

The four living ones and the twenty-four elders appear to stand out distinct from the vast throng. When the latter chant the song of victory, the former fall down and worship God and answer the song by saying, "Amen! Alleluia" - 19:4. Whose "voice" but theirs "came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great" - 19:5. The four living ones alone are seen "in the midst of the throne" - 4:6. They always lead the great host in worship in Heaven. Compare 4:8-11; 5:8, 9; 11:16, 17.

At that time, they will call upon all the rest of the redeemed in Heaven to magnify the Lord, saying, "Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great" - 19:5.

Evidently, there are more who participate in the second song than in the first; for the first was as the "voice of much people," but that of the second was as "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings"-19:6. Part of the heavenly saints volunteer to shout in triumph over the harlot; but, the choir leaders summon all to rejoice, because "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Observe the different classes mentioned; and they quickly obey the behest of the four living ones. Their song is in some respects greater than the former. They sing and shout with a greater glory. This song is a glorious paean of praise because the climax of "that blessed hope" is reached.

Therefore, they exclaim, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Wife hath made herself ready" - 19:6, 7. Jesus Christ, once the lowly Man of Nazareth, will then rule supremely as God the Almighty. Then will be fulfilled Isaiah 9:6 - "His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

I say that the second song exceeds the first. Even today, we rejoice because God gives us victory over our enemies; but we rejoice far more in hope of the glory of God to be revealed at the marriage supper of the Lamb and the universal reign of Christ. We are more occupied with the Lord and His personal glory than with the destruction of His foes. So it will be then. The marriage of the Lamb will be the crowning event, and His reign the crowning glory.

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" - 19:8. This verse shows how the Bride makes herself ready; namely, by her "righteous acts." Let us see this clearly. When we, as sinners, believe on Jesus He clothes us with His own righteousness. This is expressed by the words - "Washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" - 7:14. That expresses our standing.

But those are not Bridal robes. The Bride company weaves their marriage garments during their life and sends them ahead. They are the Bride's righteous deeds, laid up to her credit, awaiting the wedding day. Hence, it is said here - "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen" - even the linen which she herself spins all her days on earth. These make up her hope chest.

"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" - 19:9. Observe that they are not the Bride company; but they are guests. Doubtless, the Old Testament saints and those standing on the sea of glass (chapter 15) are among the guests. They are "blessed" by being permitted to enjoy that great wedding feast. Other saints will remain on earth and miss that glorious banquet, because they do not now live for it and in hope of it. They are formal worldly believers, still in bondage to religious systems. The Spirit's final call to such is, "Come out of her, My people" - 18:4. But some folk will answer that call too late for the marriage supper. Compare Matthew 25:11, 12 and be warned.

"And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" - 19:9. Who uttered those words? The angel ("one of the seven angels"-17:1) which spoke to John before. He is mentioned first in 1:1. The casual reader might think he was Gabriel, or some other angelic personage. John thought he was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; for he "fell at his feet to worship him" - 19:10. But the angel assured John that he was a fellow-

servant, a brother, a witness. See also 22:8, 9. The angel was so much like the Lord Jesus, so fully imbued with His Spirit and changed from glory to glory by beholding Jesus, that the apostle took him to be the Lord. Evidently, this angel is one of the full overcomers, seen first as the four living ones and twenty-four elders. They must possess the inward traits of the Bridegroom, in order to be the Bride company. In the fullest measure, their bodies will be "fashioned like unto the body of His (Jesus') glory" - Philippians 3:21 Revised Version. Of course, they will look like Jesus glorified.

ARMIES OF HEAVEN DESCENDING

"And I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war" - 19:11. We must bear in mind continually that John beheld these wonderful things in vision. Therefore, they are set before us by symbols as well as by plain statements. This may happen a year after the wedding - Deut. 24:5. "Heaven opened" means that it is God's time to reveal His Son as the Almighty One. The "horse" speaks of power, especially in warfare. "White" speaks of purity and righteousness. A holy war will surely be waged. This white horse is by no means the same as the one in chapter six, which refers to national affairs. What the nations hope to bring about by their "peace and safety" plans, the Lord Jesus will accomplish by His coming. And, in doing so, He must overthrow their schemes.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire" - 19:12. He clearly discerns the conduct and motives of men.

He judges in righteousness, because He discerns absolutely and minutely between right and wrong. The phrase - "on His head were many crowns" - is set over against the "ten crowns" which the anti-Christ will have - 13:1; 17:16. They indicate the universal dominion which the saints will have as associated with Jesus Christ.

THE LORD'S VARIOUS TITLES

"Jesus," which means "Savior," is His given Name - Matthew 1:21. "Anointed" or "Christ" is an official title. "Lord Jesus Christ" or "Anointed" is His full official Name and title as related to the Church. "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Anointed" - Acts 2:36. Hence, the frequent occurrence of this threefold Name in the Acts and Epistles.

Instinctively, by the Spirit, we speak to or of our Lord Jesus Christ - familiarly, intimately as Jesus (He is our elder Brother); reverently as Lord, or Lord Jesus (He is our Head, Master, Husband); and officially as the Christ, or Anointed One (He is our example, our life - II Corinthians 13:3, 4 and Galatians 2:20). Jesus is never mentioned in this book by this threefold, title. In the introductory verses, He is called "Jesus Christ." Several times He is called "Jesus," and several times "Christ." Usually it is "Lord" or "Lord God" or "Lord God Almighty," because He is here seen chiefly in the capacity of Judge and then as King.

Observe five distinct titles by which Jesus is known in this chapter:

First: The title of supreme honor and glory - "the Lord our God" (19:1), or "the Lord God omnipotent" - 19:6. Jesus, the once lowly Man of Judean rejection, will reign as God Almighty.

Second: "The Lamb" (19:7) - so called because, by His sacrificial death for a sinful race, He earned this Name. The twofold Name given to Deity in the last two chapters of this book is "Lord God" and "the Lamb" - 21:22.

Third: He is "called Faithful and True, because He demonstrated this character throughout His life on earth. Hence, He has the right to "judge and make war" - 19:11. Fourth: "His Name is called The Word of God" - 19:13.

Fifth: "He had a Name written, that no man knew, but He Himself" - 19:12. What is that Name? We believe that verse sixteen indicates what it is and where it is written - "And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a Name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Note that the phrase, "on His head many crowns," immediately precedes this statement of an unknown Name. Those many crowns speak of joint-rulership with Him. The phrase "no man knew" cannot refer to saints, but to the world; for saints know all the titles of Jesus by the Word and Spirit of God.

The nations are looking for a world ruler. They think it will be this one, or that one. When the devil puts up his choice they will accept him, not knowing that Jesus Christ is the Man of destiny.

Therefore, as a Man, descending from Heaven to be the universal Emperor, our Lord will bear a title which will express His relation to the nations. How logical then for us to read: "And He hath on His vesture (His official royal robe) and on His thigh (the symbol of strength) a Name having been written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" - 19:16.

Paul writes of that same culminating day, announcing - "the revelation of our Lord Jesus Anointed, which in its time shall show (that He is) the blessed and only Potentate, the King of those being kings, and Lord of

those being lords" - I Timothy 6:14, 15 R.V. At that time, our Lord will assume the "all authority" which the Father gave Him nearly two thousand years ago which includes all the Church, for they too will be crowned - Matthew 28:18. Genesis 1:27, 28.

JESUS JUDGES THE GENTILES

"And the armies in the Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed with fine linen, white and pure" - 19:14 Revised Version. Doubtless, all the redeemed in Heaven at that time will compose those armies. However, note an important distinction between the linen vestments of these armies and that of the Lamb's Wife. The Bride's linen is "lampron" or brilliant, lustrous, referring to her life deeds. But the linen of the armies is "leukon" or white, light, referring to our righteousness or standing by faith in Jesus. Compare 1:14 and 6:11.

Again, the word "clothed" is not the same in the Greek. When referring to the Bride (19:8), it means that there was given to her a pure, brilliant, dazzling outer garment, sparkling with her happy holy deeds through taking Christ as her life. But when referring to the armies of Heaven, in which the Lamb's Wife is included, the Word for "clothed" is "endued" or invested as with authority and power.

Christ's first appearance in those closing days will be with an enduement to His feet, showing His official relation to Christendom as Judge - 1:13. See also Luke 24:49. The phrase above, "to the foot," is prophetic of this very fourteenth verse; for the Church is His Body and shares in His official kingly investment even down to the smallest member. She is with Him in executing Revelation 19:15.

Riding "upon white horses" speaks of the place of power which the saints will enjoy with the Lord as He descends to punish the nations assembled at the battle of Armageddon and to overthrow the two beasts. II Thessalonians 1:6-10 will be fulfilled then, which agrees with 19:15.

The first six verses of Isaiah sixty-three are a graphic, sublime, and powerful description of those closing days. "Who is this that cometh from, Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine vat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me: for I will tread them in Mine anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld Me. And I will tread down the people in Mine anger, and make them drunk in My fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth."

So great will be the slaughter of men in that battle, that John declares as did also Ezekiel, that the fowls of heaven will be invited to "eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great" - 19:17, 18. "The slain of the Lord shall be many" - Isaiah 66:16; Zechariah 14. Jesus foretold of that hour saying, "Whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" - Matthew 24:28; Luke 17:37. The undertakers will be seven months burying the dead after the fowls will have been filled - Ezekiel 39.

The last three verses of chapter nineteen announce the overthrow of the false emperor and of the false prophet; namely, the two beasts. The greatest battle in all ages will be fought; the greatest victory will be achieved. It will be proven forever, not only that man is a failure religiously and nationally - but that man's very best, brightest, and biggest is a horrible stench in the Divine nostrils. Therefore, then will be introduced the universal reign of righteousness and peace for a thousand years. Jesus Christ shall reign.

I want to scale the utmost height,
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray, till Heaven I've found,
Lord, lead me on to higher ground!

THE LONGED FOR MILLENNIUM

Chapter Twenty

"And I saw an Angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the pit of the abyss and a great chain in His hand" - 20:1 Revised Version.

This chapter falls into four parts:

First: Satan imprisoned - 20:1-3.

Second: Believers reigning - 20:4-6.

Third: Satan loosed - 20:7-10.

Fourth: The wicked dead judged - 20:11-15.

It covers a thousand years. We saw by 1:18 that the Lord Jesus has "the keys of hell and of death." By that we know that He is the "Angel" here mentioned. We saw by 3:7, that "the key" symbolizes authority. "A great chain" speaks of mighty binding power. We see that 20:2 agrees with 12:9 showing that the dragon is the devil. When our Lord descends to the battle of Armageddon and overthrows the beast and the false prophet, He will seize hold of Satan and cast him into the pit of the abyss or hell and shut him up therein for a thousand years. (These first three verses belong properly with chapter nineteen).

Oh, how different the world will then be. The deceitful and destructive spirit that now works "in the children of disobedience" stirring up strife, driving men mad over pleasure and mad over money, deceiving the people religiously - that spirit will not be here. Thank God! Satan will not be able to stir men's hearts with selfish greed and graft, and lead them to slay one another in bloody combats. The nations will not "learn war any more" - Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3.

BELIEVERS WILL REIGN

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them" - 20:4.

In his vision, the apostle's telescope carried him forward through a thousand years. He beheld a miniature picture of the new creation principalities and the reign of the saints with Christ during the Millennial period. Evidently, the thrones were of varying splendor according to the different ranks of believers. Special reference is given to "them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" - 20:4. "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," but not in the same capacity or nearness as the Church.

Now who are "they" that sat on thrones, but "the armies in Heaven"? - 19:14. They were the hosts at the marriage of the Lamb. We must distinguish between the armies of Heaven, and "the souls of them that were beheaded." Not all the redeemed will be at that great wedding feast. The souls of those beheaded will not be there. They will witness for Jesus during the tribulation days after the Church will have been translated. Their martyrdom will not be counted a high honor bestowed upon them. It will be a chastisement for not having accepted Christ earlier.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" - 20:5. This should be read as a parenthetical statement, for it refers to the wicked dead only - not to any believers on Christ. No believing dead will remain in the graves after the resurrection of the saints at the opening of the Millennium. Verse six declares that "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Saved folk are all "blessed and holy"; otherwise, they are not saved. A second resurrection is implied; and that will embrace the wicked dead only.

The first resurrection really began with the raising of Jesus from the dead; for Christ is "the firstfruits of them that slept" - I Corinthians 15:20, 23. It includes those that arose the day that He arose - Matthew 27:52, 53. It includes the resurrection of those in the Church which are in the graves (I Thessalonians 4:16) and the Old Testament saints - Daniel 12:2. It culminates with the close of the Millennium, though no believers will remain in the graves and be raised at the end; but they will be changed. "Death is swallowed up in victory," not only by corruption putting on incorruption, the dead raised incorruptible; but by changing the mortal to immortality without dying - I Corinthians 15:54. The "mystery ... we shall all be changed" has in it the value of resurrection. To arrest the death tendency by changing our death-doomed bodies into immortality is equivalent to a resurrection, because the entire new creation is dependent forever upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

SATAN RELEASED FROM PRISON

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" - 20:7, 8.

The devil has always been deceiving the people. Just before the Millennium, he will climax his deception of the nations through the craft and power of the anti-Christ and the miracles of the false prophet. The battle of Armageddon will be the culmination of national satanic power - Rev. 16. But Christ will descend with His holy ones and defeat him, casting him into the pit of the abyss and the two beasts into the lake of fire.

Then when Satan will be let out of the pit at the close of a thousand years imprisonment, he will resume his infernal conflict against the Son of God, taking revenge for his confinement. He will find a vast horde of

people on earth who will have yielded feigned obedience to the Lord during His Millennial reign, because in heart they are His enemies, not being born again. "Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee" - Psalm 66:3. "The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him" - Psalm 81:15. God's foes are one. They are all the children of the devil - John 8:44. Hence, in Ezekiel thirty-eight and thirty-nine, the national foes of Christ and His people at the beginning of the Millennium will be represented by Gog and Magog; and in Revelation twenty at the close of the Millennium.

Gog was the second son of Japheth. The word means "high, to cover, to surmount, to top."

Magog was the land of Gog. It means "covering, overtopping." Satan is working in men to exalt themselves above God and go over the top for his satanic majesty. But they with him will finally be hurled to the lowest bottom. That will be the devil's last fiendish combat against eternal

righteousness. It will also be man's last chance to show on whose side he stands - the final proof that "the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" - Romans 8:6, 7. The natural man is subject to the temptations of the devil.

Oh, how solemn! Men have a lifetime in which to choose whom they will serve. They often seem to be on the fence; but, fence-sitters invariably tumble to the enemy, finally. Present-day fence squatters will end up with anti-Christ. And the Millennial reign will consummate in a similar manner; for men must define their position some time.

Sad! Sad! The finale. "Fire came down from God out of Heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" - 20:9, 10. He goes to his own place, "where the beast and the false prophet are," to receive from the Hand of Justice what he has been giving to mankind for six thousand years; namely, to be "tormented day and night into the ages of the ages" - 20:10. Does that sound like the devil would be saved, as a few fools have intimated? Christ did not die for the devil.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them" - 20:11. In the time of Noah's flood "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished"; that is, the inhabitants were drowned - II Peter 3:6. However, the earth was not annihilated neither were the people; for they must appear before God for judgment. There followed a reconstruction of the earth. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" - II Peter 3:7. What believers experience now - "regeneration" (Titus 3:5) - is what the earth will experience during the Millennium (Matthew 19:28), a new earth and a new heaven as compared with present conditions - "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" - Isaiah 65:17. But the complete renewal of the earth will not take place until at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, when God will exclaim, "Behold, I make all things new" - 21:5.

In II Peter 3:7, it is intimated that the elements of destruction are pent up in the heaven and the earth, being "stored up with fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." That judgment will begin at the close of this age. Then it will be suspended for a thousand years; at the end of which it will be resumed and finished, as stated in 20:11.

Therefore, the fleeing away of the heaven and earth from the face of God as Judge teaches us that the whole old creation must pass away forever from His Presence. He will have endured it for seven thousand years. He will endure it no longer. Inasmuch as men reject the finished judgment that fell upon God's Son in their behalf, there will not remain even a shadow on which to stand before the Judge. Hence, John declares - "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God" - 20:12. But they will have no foundation upon which to stand - those will be the wicked dead only.

There will be no believers in that company; for they will have been raised a thousand years before - "shall reign with Him a thousand years" - 20:6.

"And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life" - 20:12.

Mark well the meaning and use of these different kinds of books. "Another book" is distinguished from "the books." The sea gave up its dead, and death (the grave) and hell (hades, the receptacle of the wicked dead) delivered up their dead. All the wicked dead for all the past will appear before the just Judge.

Note two vital facts: They will be "judged out of those things which were written in the books," and they will be judged "according to their works." The deeds of the wicked during the ages have been recording opposite their respective names. The judgment of the "great" will be more severe than that of the "small"; but all will be judged. None will escape. Of course, their punishment will be according to their respective

works. Note that the destiny of men is not determined by their works, but their judgment is according to their works, because their destiny was settled beforehand by their rejection of the Savior. For which reason they will not be found written in the book of life "-20:15.

It is wonderful how the Holy Spirit anticipates error. False prophets claim that the wicked dead will have a chance to be saved after death. What chance is intimated here, pray tell? "The book of life" is opened in full view. Search is made in that infallible record by the just Judge for the names of the wicked; but not one is found there. If they were written in "the book of life" they would not be wicked, and they would not remain in the graves to be raised at the end of the Millennium. They will not be judged out of "the book of life," but out of the things recorded in "the books."

They will be "judged EVERY MAN according to their works." The sad inevitable finale - "If any one was not found, having been written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." The past perfect tense of the participle "written" (gegrammenos, Greek) proves positively that all names in "the book of life" will be recorded long before that final judgment day. Indeed, note when they were written - "Whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world" - 17:8. "The book of life" will there be opened to prove finally and forever the justice of God in consigning the wicked dead to their deserved eternal abode. "Death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire" - 20:14. Hell (hades, Greek) is only a temporary imprisonment of the wicked dead till the great judgment day, after which there will be no more graves and no more hell. The phrase "eternal hell," used by some preachers, is not Scriptural. The lake of fire will be their unending abode. "This is the second death," as distinguished from the death of all men on the Cross. "Because we thus judge (reckon)," said Paul, "that if One (Christ) died for all, then all died" - II Corinthians 5:14. "Christ died for the ungodly" - for all the ungodly, for all sinners, for all His enemies - Romans 5:6, 8, 10. God counts man's death with Christ on Calvary the first death. Thank God! They who accept the first death will escape the second death.

THE ETERNAL STATE

Chapter Twenty-one

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and the sea is no more" - 21:1 Revised Version. Revelation twenty-one falls into three interesting portions: The New Universe, The New Jerusalem, and The Glorious Bride. In spirit John stands at the end of the Millennium and the end of time and introduces us into the eternal state, but no further than an introduction. The "new heaven" and the "new earth" are reconstructions of the former, a coming forth from the terrible dissolution which Peter records (II Peter 3:10-13) into the condition of incorruption and unchangeableness. Its inhabitants shall enjoy not only righteousness and peace as during the Millennium, but also ineffable bliss. In the most absolute sense, there will be the "reconstruction of all things" - Acts 3:21.

God exclaims, "Behold, I make ALL THINGS NEW" - 21:5. Accordingly, there will be no more sea. Was there no sea in the beginning? The first word of Scripture is - "In the beginning God created the heavens (R.V. is plural) and the earth." As to the earth, "He created it not in vain (a waste, a vacancy), He formed it to be inhabited" - Isaiah 45:18. But Genesis 1:2 says, "The earth was without form (a waste), and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Genesis 1:6- 10 intimates that the water condition did not exist when the earth was first made. At any rate, here is a fine spiritual truth. The sea today speaks of troubled masses. "The wicked are like the troubled sea" - Isaiah 57:20. But in that coming day there will be no more trouble. Note 21:4.

"And I John saw the city, the holy, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of the Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" - 21:2 Greek. This is the city for which Abraham looked four thousand years ago - Hebrews 11:10. This is "My Darling" for which Jesus longed before times eternal - Psalm 22:20; 35:17. In his vision, John beheld this same company a thousand years before, not "as a Bride adorned" but as "the armies in Heaven" - 19:14.

At the beginning of the Millennium, it will be said, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Wife hath made herself ready." Then for a thousand years, He will be known as the "King of kings, and Lord of lords," His Bride ruling con-jointly with Him. "For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet" - I Cor. 15:25. Christ will reign as God Almighty. Then, and not till then, "His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" - Isaiah 9:6. Then He, together with His Bride, having subdued all things unto Him (the Father) shall be subject unto Him forever "that God may be all in all" - I Corinthians 15:24-28.

During the eternity past, the glory of the Son was that He was "equal with God" because He was God.

Compare John 17:5 with Philippians 2:6. His glory during His coming thousand-year rulership will be that He, as a Man (His Bride sharing that honor with Him), shall reign as Sovereign. Finally, Christ must have a recompense for emptying Himself of His first glory and identifying Himself with mankind that He might redeem men and save them. That eternal glory will be that, throughout the coming ceaseless ages, He will be the Head of a Divine human creation wrought by clothing humanity with Divinity; and thereby bring the creature into full harmony with the perfect will of the holy Creator. He will bring the fruit of His sacrifice into the closest possible relationship with the infinite God. In these two closing chapters, we are reminded constantly of "God" and "the Lamb." Through all eternity, we will worship God and the Lamb. That will be "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" - Ephesians 3:11. "And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" - 21:3. All the saints will constitute that gigantic tabernacle, or Divine place. The tabernacle or "tent of meetings" in the wilderness, in Moses' time, was Jehovah's place of meeting with men then - Exodus 25:8. That was a shadow of the holy city here mentioned.

While Jesus was on earth, He was God's tabernacle among men. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" - II Corinthians 5:19. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" - John 14:9. Then in the absence of Jesus, His followers have been Jehovah's habitation. "I will dwell in them, and walk in them" - II Corinthians 6:16.

Finally and forever, the blood-washed throng will be the glorious dwelling place of the Triune God in the city in the sky. What a great marvel! God does not set that tabernacle in Heaven, but brings it down out of Heaven. Oh, how near to earth the eternal throne will be. That tabernacle is a holy city, and that city is the Bride of the Lamb and her companions - the Bride adorned!

"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" - 21:5. The first four verses of this chapter introduce the holy city. From 21:9 to 22:5 is given a detailed description of it. In 21:5-8 are concluding remarks similar to chapter twenty-two. "Behold, I make all things new" is a very meaningful statement. There will be absolutely nothing old in the eternal state. "The former things," the fading perishable things - all things marred by sin - will have "passed away." It will be the new creation in the fullest and most glorious sense.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" - 21:7.

This is a great and final encouragement. Hosea 11:1 is a sidelight on this verse - "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt." Exodus 4:22 declares, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My son, even My firstborn." But these Scriptures were also fulfilled in Christ - "Out of Egypt have I called My Son" - Matthew 2:15.

As Adam and all his progeny are termed the old creation; so Christ, the last Adam, and all the countless fruit of redemption are termed the new creation. This new creation, with Christ as its Head, will be regarded as God's triumphant Son - the Father's lastborn; for all who believe must be overcomers in some measure. All the redeemed, viewed as one whole, "inherit all things."

The striking and eternal contrast between the destiny and condition of the righteous and that of the unrighteous is indicated by setting verse eight over against verse seven. Verse eight records eight classes, which include all the Christ-rejecters who will be cast into the lake of fire. Here, eight speaks of frail humanity (4) multiplied by the number of division (2).

From that burning lake there will be no egress. Jesus calls that lake "a furnace of fire" and "gehenna fire" - Matthew 13:42, 50. He says it is "eternal fire," "eternal punishment," as set over against "eternal life." Study Matthew 13:42, 50 and 18:8, 9 and 25:41, 46. In these citations the word "hell" is not "hades," or the temporary abode of the wicked; but, "gehenna," their final and eternal and unchangeable abode. It is ridiculous to limit these Scriptures to the valley of Hinnom, which was a faint picture of the lake of fire. The fleshly mind is enmity against God, takes sides with the devil, gives God the lie, and denies the eternal "damnation of gehenna" - Matthew 23:33.

It's "tongue ... is set on fire of gehenna" (James 3:6) and wrests the Scriptures to its "own destruction." Scripture is logical. If there will be a happy home for believers on Jesus, there will be also a prison for unbelievers. If the one is eternal, why is not the other? Though it is no longer popular, yet it is true still, that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" - Mark 16:16.

THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB

Revelation 21:9 records the fifth vision viewpoint. The eight preceding verses describe the eternal state. But the following verses picture the Bride as seen during the Millennium. The "great city, the holy Jerusalem" will

be pervaded with dazzling splendor "having the glory of God." Its luminary is like a stone most precious, as a jasper stone crystal-like, because "the Lamb is the Light thereof" - 21:23.

Observe that the city is a "prepared" city literally, "having been prepared as a bride having been adorned for her husband" - 21:2. Yes, we read in 19:7 that the Lamb's Wife "hath made herself ready." How? She hearkened to the Voice of the Father and inclined her ear to His Word. Thus, she forgot her "own people" and her "father's house," putting His Son first in her devotions. She accepted Him as her Lord and worshiped Him. She became "all glorious within," by the effectual working of the Word as she believed. Her clothing became of "wrought gold" - Psalm 45:10, 13.

"A Bride adorned" is the city itself. If the Bride is a company of saints, what constitutes the adornment? Two facts suggest that her adornment is also a group of saints. First, the enormous dimensions of the holy city; and, second, where is the innumerable multitude of chapter seven? How can that great company be said to adorn the Bride company? The various meanings of the Greek word "kekosmemenen" help us to see how. It means marshaled, decked, adorned, embellished, honored, ornamented. By the Shulamite's entire separation unto her beloved, she compelled the highest esteem of other women.

The daughters exclaimed, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? ...that we may seek him with thee." Again we read, "The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her." They honored her by calling out, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" - Song of Solomon 6:1, 9, 10. After she was married and left for her wedding trip, they shouted aloud, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee" - 6:13. That is a rich picture of how other saints become an ornament of the Bride group.

Full overcomers - Philadelphia or brotherly-love believers - learn the Lord in the deepest and largest sense. They really become the five senses to the rest of the Body. They see as Christ sees, having "doves' eyes" - 4:1. They hear as Christ hears, their ears having been fastened to the gateway of God's will. They taste and eat the Word of God. They are of quick scent; for "he that is spiritual judgeth (discerneth) all things, yet he himself is judged (discerned) of no man" - I Corinthians 2:15. They feel the deepest pangs of heart, being wounded and torn and crushed, dying daily, led "as sheep for the slaughter" - Romans 8:36. Being "full of eyes before and behind," understanding the ways of Jehovah in the past and His plans for the future, they enter so deeply and minutely into the things of Christ that they "fill up" the sufferings of Christ "for His Body's sake" - the Church - Col. 1:24.

Their usefulness is in a hidden way. Such saints are comparatively few in number. Nevertheless, their words and their writings are quoted. Their doctrine is studied and proclaimed. Their full surrender, their wholehearted devotion, their holy walk in Christ, all speak loudly and effectively to other saints who stand aloof from them in worship and service, because the way is too narrow for them. What the faithful, self-sacrificing, truehearted saints are to the whole Church will not be known till the book of rewards is opened. Then the effulgent glory of the Bride will shine forth in the exhibition of the help that the great majority of believers will have received through her life and ministry here. Paul said to the saints in Philippi and Thessalonica - "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown" - Philippians 4:1. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy" - I Thessalonians 2:19, 20.

THE IMPOSING WALL

"And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the Children of Israel" - 21:12.

Similarly to the earthly Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem will be surrounded by a wall. It will not be a wall of mineral stone, but a wall of saints whom Peter calls "living stones" - I Peter 2:5. It will measure exactly one hundred and forty-four cubits, a cubit being "a man's measure," or the distance from a man's elbow to his fingertip - 21:17. They are wholly of Israel, for upon the gates are inscribed "the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel." Doubtless, they will be the 144,000 which were sealed in chapter seven and are seen standing before the throne in chapter fourteen.

The "twelve gates" agree with the entire Word of God that all Divine blessings to the whole world came through Israel. "As concerning the flesh Christ came" of Israel - Romans 9:5. Through their fall, salvation and the riches of Christ have come to the Gentiles. "Now if the fall of them (Israel) be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? For if the casting away of them (Israel) be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" - Romans 11:12, 15.

"The kings of the earth," those who shall reign over the saved nations, shall "bring their glory and honor into" the city. But they must come in through the gates, even through Israel; for "the gates of it shall not be shut at all" - 21:24, 25. The word "twelve" is unspeakably full of meaning here. It is the number of Divine government. Twelve was the prevailing number in Jehovah's first kingdom on earth; namely, the twelve tribes of Israel. The duration of the kingdom, before it was divided into the two tribes and the ten tribes, was ten times twelve - 120 years. Solomon had exactly twelve officers over his realm. He had 12,000 horsemen. Jesus ordained twelve apostles, who shall sit on twelve thrones and reign over the twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve legions of angels were at the Master's service if necessary. There are twelve signs in the zodiac. The sun rules by twelves. There are twelve months in the year, twelve times thirty days in a year, twelve hours in a day (John 11:9), twelve times five minutes in an hour, and twelve times five seconds in a minute. The duration of Gentile dominion is twelve times two hundred and ten.

With this same number twelve, God will introduce the eternal ages. Seven is the number of the fullness of time, or dispensational completeness, God's dealings with man; that is, the fullness and completeness of the results of redemption. He began with seven creative days, and will climax the seven ages of time with the Millennial Age. Therefore, our present study book - Revelation - abounds with sevens, commencing with the seven churches and closing the Gentile times with the seven last plagues.

But where the figure seven ceases, there the figure twelve begins; for twelve is the expansion of seven which is three plus four, while twelve is three times four. Wonderful! Time ends with dependent humanity (4) added to Deity (3) equaling unchangeable perfection (7). Jesus Christ will have "put down all rule and all authority and power" - I Corinthians 15:24. Then humanity, by the Infinite One, will exhibit to the uttermost the absolute and eternal dominion of Jehovah - God all and in all. God is One as to Nature, and three as to Personalities; both speaking of His indivisible power and glory.

In fact, twelve is the highest number of actual value. Thirteen is simply six plus seven. Fourteen is seven plus seven, or two times seven. Fifteen is three times five, the number of grace multiplied by the number of Deity. Sixteen again reminds us of weakness, being four times four in which Deity is absent. Hence, the large figures of measurements here - 144 cubits and 12,000 furlongs - are multiples of twelve.

"And He measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" - 21:16. The shape of the city will be cubical which speaks of perfection, solidity, and durability. "God" and "the Lamb" being the glory of that city, God dwelling in man will be displayed eternally in every direction. The context indicates that the heavenly city will come down over the earthly Jerusalem. No doubt, the two will be merged into one. It seems too wonderful to expect; but, evidently, the "new earth" finally will be the throne room of Jehovah. "And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and

He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" - 21:3. No marvel that Satan is striving to hold his dominion of the world. What makes a city? In the natural, a city is made up of houses and the people who inhabit them. The people make the city. Likewise, the new Jerusalem will be constituted of redeemed people. Their glorified bodies will be the "mansions" or "houses from Heaven," in which they shall dwell - John 14:2; II Corinthians 5:1, 2. Thus, the saints themselves will make up the city, which will be the eternal habitation of Jehovah.

THE SPLENDOR OF THE CITY

"And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass...And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" - 21:18-21. Observe that three classes of the rarest minerals are employed to express the wealth, the beauty, and the dazzling splendor of that city. They express also the solidity and imperishableness thereof. The degrees of Christian development here will be on exhibition there forever. Some will compose the city and street of gold, some the wall of jasper, and others the gates of pearl. A street suggests activity, being the place where the inhabitants of the city move. There being only one street, "the street," indicates the one-accordness of the saints in glory in their glorious activities of worship and praise toward the Triune God.

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones" - 21:19. Twelve precious stones in nature are used to picture the unutterable value and preciousness of Christ in the saints unto God Himself. As certain saints will adorn or garnish the Bride group (21:2), so certain other saints will embellish those who constitute the foundation.

Possibly the 144,000 of chapters seven and fourteen will be those "precious stones." Following is a description of those several stones, with their meanings.

JASPER - a very precious stone. The jasper of Scripture corresponds with our diamond and is as clear as crystal. It means, "He will be made prominent." The crystal-like brightness and preciousness of Christ and the pure transparency of His character will be displayed in His saints.

These qualities are seen in them now - how much more when they have their glorified bodies!

SAPPHIRE - a very beautiful stone, sky blue; sometimes red, blue, and yellow mixed - an exquisite blend. It is incomparably precious - Job 28:16. The pavement of the God of Israel is likened to a sapphire stone - Exodus 24:10. It means, "Telling out, a recounting." The exquisite beauty and heavenliness of Christ will shine forth through sapphire saints. Bear in mind that all these garnishings are pertaining to Israel. The brightness and glory of the Bridegroom, which will shine forth through the Bride, must of necessity be far greater. Therefore, the city is "pure gold" and the street is "pure gold" - 21:18, 21.

CHALCEDONY - a gem variegated with divers colors in the form of clouds. It is copper-like, which speaks of the durability of the glory of Christ which will be exhibited in His people - not a fading veneer, but an eternal embellishment.

EMERALD - a beautiful gem, green without mixture. It figures the resurrection. That is, the resurrection life and power of Jesus Christ will be displayed in the immortal and incorruptible bodies of the saved. The new creation, life out of death, is the result of redemption.

SARDONYX - resembles the sardius and onyx stones, the latter being like a fingernail - suggestive of health. The glorified humanity of Jesus will be thus on exhibition forever.

SARDIUS - a reddish color, approaching white. It means "ruddiness," suggestive of the unfading newness of the new creation - "all things new."

CHRYSOLEYTE - a golden stone, yellowish green, very transparent. The glory of the resurrection of Christ will show forth through the chrysolyte garnishing of His glorified people.

BERYL - a jewel of sea green or bluish green color. It signifies, "She will impoverish." It will be manifested in the saints by the resurrection and translation power of Christ, that the devil has been impoverished or displaced to make room for them in the coming glory.

TOPAZ - a yellowish or pale dead green. It means, "Affliction has fled away." "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" - 21:4. In topaz believers will appear the eternal proof that "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" - Matthew 8:17.

CHRYSOPRASUS - a golden leak; that is, a stone like a leak in color, akin to the chrysolyte. It is of a bluish hue, or green with golden brightness. It signifies "golden" or "Divine achievement." The Divine achievements of the Cross and of the operations of the Holy Spirit will stand out in bold and bright relief for God to glory in and for angels to wonder at forever.

JACINTH - a precious stone of the color of the hyacinth; also, like an amethyst, violet in color.

This gives prominence to the royalty of Jesus Christ seen in the redeemed, though He once dwelt in a body of limitations on earth. The glorious climax is reached in the last of these brilliant stone settings.

AMETHYST - violet, bordering on purple, composed of strong blue and deep red. It is called, "The dream stone" or "I shall be brought back as from a dream." The right to reign will be seen in the kingliness of the blood washed. Our Lord will occupy His throne, earned by the sacrifice of Himself, after the many years of patient waiting - as if it had been but a dream. After the Millennium, instead of Christ and His people appearing as a gigantic "fullgrown man" (Eph. 4:13) or the battle-clad "armies in Heaven" (Rev. 19:14), they will be seen as a majestic cubical city.

They will be expressive of rest from labor, peace after war, prosperity unchanging, and enjoyment undisturbed, unceasing, and eternal.

"BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY"

Chapter Twenty-two

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" - 22:1. We might wonder if there were no reference to the Holy Spirit in the description of the holy city. But here it is - "A pure river of water." Ezekiel forty-seven speaks of this same river as flowing out from the earthly Jerusalem during the Millennium. Here we have mention of the three Persons of the Godhead - God the Father, the Lamb, and the Holy Spirit.

The third is called, "rivers of living water" in John 7:38. Also, as the rivers figure the Spirit, so "the tree of life" figures Christ. Twelve fruits - a variety that satisfies fully, yielded monthly - simply means that the saved will be dependent upon the Lamb during the unchanging and unceasing cycles (3 times 4) of eternity; twelve

being the absolute number of Divine rule. "And the leaves of the tree are for the nurturing of the nations" - 22:2 Greek.

As Jesus Christ is more to some saints today than to others - "bread" to some and only "manna" to others; likewise, He will be the nourishment as "fruit" to some and as "leaves" to others. It is surprising that the Greek word "therapeia" should be limited to healing by translators. It means "a waiting on, service, attendance, a fostering, nurturing, attending in sickness, medical treatment," and five other things - Liddell and Scott. Thank God, there will be no need of healing medicines in eternity. But the eternal Preventive - "the Tree of life," "the Lamb of God" - will be there.

"There shall be no more curse" (22:3) carries the same thought; for the Lamb redeemed us forever from the curse. Compare Galatians 3:13, 14 with Deuteronomy 28:22. "And His servants shall serve Him" - 22:3. Some believers today know the Lord only as a Master to be served. They learn little of real worship and fellowship with Him. They will have the same place in the coming age. Others will have a far closer place with Him, even as they enjoy Him now. Often the question is asked, "Will we see God?" Here is the answer - "They shall see His face" - 22:4. "God" and "the Lamb" shall ever be before us in the eternal estate.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

"And He said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true" - Rev. 22:6. These closing words cover the entire period of the Millennial reign. Some items refer to its beginning; others to its close. The angel mentioned here and in verse eight was mentioned before in 1:1 and 18:1 and 19:10 whom John mistook for the Lord Jesus. The statements - "Behold, I am coming quickly" and "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" - indicate that John was standing in his vision at the end of the Church Age, and heard and saw things pertaining to the eternal ages - 22:7, 10.

"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" -

22:7. This book begins with emphasis, and ends with great emphasis. In 1:3 a blessing is promised to him that reads, and to them that hear and keep its contents. Now, in this last chapter, a blessing is pronounced upon him that keeps these sayings. An exhortation is given to: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book" - 22:10. A severe threat is pronounced upon everyone who may add to or take from these words - 22:18, 19. Note also that these closing words are given because the Lord says, "Behold, I come quickly," and "the time is at hand." How diligently then we should ponder the sayings of this prophecy, how wholeheartedly we should believe them, and how fervently we should proclaim them to all. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" - 22:17.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" - 22:11. Men determine their eternal condition and doom by their own choice while mercy is offered to them.

Mercy's call will cease; mercy's door will close with the close of Christ's thousand-year reign.

Nothing can change the weal or woe of men after that. The eternal fixedness of man's destiny is then settled forever. Verse twelve is the Lord's final announcement of rewards which He will grant to those who believe during His reign, and to all His saints forever.

"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" - 22:15. "Dogs" here mean wicked beastly men. Compare Psalm 22:16 and I Corinthians 15:32. That shows that the holy city and the new earth will be the eternal abode of the blood-washed multitudes. "Without" means the "outer darkness" of which Jesus spoke in Matthew. That may be some planet somewhere, which can never come near the "new Heaven" and the "new earth" - 21:1.

"I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" - 22:16. Seven times our blessed Lord breaks forth in this last chapter by the personal pronoun "I" to assure us that He has spoken. His identity is unmistakable - "I am the Root and the Offspring of David." As to His Deity, Christ was before David; as to His humanity, He came after him. He was the "Alpha," "the Beginning," "the First." He announces Himself also to be "the bright and morning Star," for whom Israel are looking. Together with His heavenly people Jesus will be "the Day Star" indeed, the incomparable Luminary of the saved nations - II Peter 1:19; Rev. 21:23, 24. Thus, He will truly be the "Omega," "the End," "the Last" - 22:13.

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" - 22:17. The Holy Spirit has not failed to give a final invitation to all men during this Church Age. The Bride company cooperates with Him in this call. Every one that hears the summons is bidden to pass it on. Jesus Christ proclaimed "WHOSOEVER" in His

first message - John 3:16. The Holy Spirit proclaims "WHOSOEVER" in the last message, because it is not the will of God "that any should perish" - II Peter 3:9.

"If any man shall add unto," "if any man shall take away from," refer to false teachers who misinterpret Divine prophecy by adding their own prognostications thereto or by denying the written Word. Such pose as prophets of the last days.

FAITHFUL FINALE

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen" - 22:20. This is the invincible assurance that the foregoing prophecy is Divine and that its certain fulfillment is at hand. John, who received the Prophecy in behalf of the churches (22:16), also responds in their behalf most gladly saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" - 22:20. This has been the true attitude of every spiritual believer throughout this whole Church period. How much more should it be our cry as we "see the day approaching"? - Hebrews 10:25. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" - 22:21.

The Bible began with "God" and ends with "our Lord Jesus Anointed." In the beginning there was power - "God created." At the end there is "grace" and "glory" through His Son. Forevermore we shall worship "God" and "the Lamb." "All things new" will be eternally true! - 21:5.

THE BIBLE CALENDAR

1260 is a very important number in the books of Daniel and Revelation. It is mentioned as "a time, and times, and half a time" (or dividing of time), and "forty-two months," and "a thousand two hundred and threescore days." Its meaning is simple. The Bible month has exactly thirty days, and the Bible year has exactly 360 days. In Genesis seven and eight we learn that 150 days are counted from the seventeenth day of the second month to the seventeenth day of the seventh month, requiring exactly thirty days to a month.

A "season" in Scripture is three months, or ninety days. A "time" is twelve months of thirty days each, or 360 days. "Times" (dual number in Hebrew and Greek) are twice 360, or 720 days.

Therefore, "half a time" is 180 days. Hence, "a time, and times, and half a time" are 1260 days, or three and a half years. Accordingly, "seven times" in Daniel four are exactly seven years, or 2520 days. Study Daniel twelve.

But the questions arise: "Why is our year 365 days long?" "Why do we have leap year every four years?" Scientists have found that the length of our solar year is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 or 48 seconds long. Therefore, one extra day must be added every four years. So it is added to February, the shortest month. As noted above, up to the time of the flood in Noah's time, the year was 360 days long or 30 days to the month. Sometime after the flood (it is not known exactly when), the earth's path around the sun became oblong; that is, longer than broad, like traveling around an egg. That fact accounts for our calendar year being longer than the Bible calendar year. Doubtless, originally that path was a perfect circle.

"What caused that change?" you may ask. Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" - Ephesians 2:2. Rebellion against God - the rebellion of the devil and of men caused that change. When Jesus Christ shall become universal Ruler, and Satan be hurled into hell, and the two wild beasts of Revelation thirteen will be cast into the lake of fire, the calendar year will be exactly 360 days long. The earth's path around the sun will be a perfect circle.

About 606 B.C., God gave world dominion to the Gentiles. That was the beginning of the period called, "the times of the Gentiles" - Luke 21:24. That year, Nebuchadnezzar became king of the Babylonian Empire. The Lord said, "And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him" - Jeremiah 27:6, 7.

The ten tribes of Israel had been taken captive into Assyria nearly one hundred years before that. In 606 B.C., the kingdom of Judah (the two tribes) was carried as captive into Babylon. The entire nation of Israel will be subject to Gentile dominion until the Lord comes to inaugurate His Millennial reign and deliver them nationally.

The four beasts of Daniel seven symbolize that whole period of Gentile reign: The lion figures Babylon - 606 B.C. to 536 B.C.

The bear figures Medo-Persia - 536 B.C. to 334 B.C. The leopard figures Greece - 334 B.C. to 31 B.C.

The dreadful and terrible beast figures the Roman Empire - 31 B.C. to 638 A.D.

The entire time of Gentile rule is 2520 years in Scriptural figures. Therefore, that period should, according to Bible figures, have ended in 1914. Many believers had hoped it would, and were expecting the Lord to come and catch us away. Why did He not come then? For these reasons: Our reckoning by 2520 years is

according to the Scripture calendar, of 360 days to a year. But, we are living in Gentile times, when the years are five and one-fourth days longer. If we compute the time by our calendar, or solar measurement, that period should have ended about 1950. How is that? Five and one-fourth times 2520 equals 13,230. Dividing that number by 365 and one-fourth equals 36 and four-fifths years. 1914 plus 36 equals 1950.

On what ground may we calculate thus? It is an established fact that the sixty- nine weeks, or 483 prophetic years of Daniel 9:24-26, reach from 445 B.C. - Artaxerxes' command to Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2) - to 33 A.D. the death of Christ. However, by the Bible calendar, the crucifixion should have occurred seven years earlier. But, by converting the Bible years into the equivalent number of our calendar years - the time according to our current calendar - we arrive at 33 A.D. This reckoning also proves that 33 A.D. is the correct date of the death of Christ.

Other supposed earlier dates throw the calculations out of commission entirely. Jesus Christ was not born four years B.C., as some men claim. Furthermore, all time measurements in the study of Bible prophecy must be computed according to the rule of thirty days to a month and 360 days to a year. The figures in Daniel and in Revelation demand this. Then they must be adapted to our times by transposing the years of 360 days each into the equivalent number of solar years of 365 and one-fourth days to a year, because the earth travels five and one-fourth days slower around the sun than it should. We should not be surprised at this. God made the sun stand still a whole day, that Joshua might gain a victory over his foes. He also lengthened the day ten degrees, or forty minutes, for King Hezekiah. And we read that - "The God of Heaven...changeth the times and the seasons - Daniel 2:19-21.

Thus, it becomes evident why the Lord did not come as soon as we expected Him. It is interesting to read that the Holy Spirit anticipated the disappointment. Hence, Paul wrote - "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" - Hebrews 10:35-37.

"Oh!" you exclaim, "that was written to Israel." Exactly so. But, if the coming to them is delayed, is it not a delay to the Church also? The stretching out of Gentile times postpones the beginning of the Millennial reign of Christ, and thus the resurrection and translation of the Body of Christ are pushed forward.

"Are you not setting dates?" cries one; especially he who claims that the Church must go through the tribulation period. We answer by asking, "Does he not thus set a date?" We are not setting dates. We are simply naming dates already set in the Scriptures. The prophetic reckoning of Daniel's seventy weeks, or 490 years, by prophetic students has been proven correct. Daniel 9:27 only waits fulfillment. Why may we not expect the other figures to be fulfilled?

We are not predicting that a certain year will absolutely be the end of Gentile times; but the fulfillments of prophecies, and the religious and international conditions of the world, point to the nearness of Jesus' coming. What prophecies have not been fulfilled? Everything, every present providence, urges us to be ready for Christ's coming. Jesus says to Israel - "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" - Matthew 24:42, 44.

To the Church the Spirit says, "Unto them that look for Him," and if unto all them also that love His appearing," and to them that keep "the Word of My patience" - Hebrews 9:28; II Timothy 4:8; Revelation 3:10. He will come.

The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols ... to wait" - not for the tribulation time but - "for His Son from Heaven" - I Thessalonians 1:9, 10. It is not stated how long before the end of this age Christ may come for the first rank overcomers. Unto those who believed the prophecies and looked for the Messiah, like Simeon and the prophetess Anna, Jesus came. To such folk He will come again.

The thrilling announcement throughout this book is - "Behold, I come quickly" - 3:11. This is repeated four times. Finally, He exclaims, "SURELY I come quickly" - 22:20. With the first, He added, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Amen