

The book of  
DANIEL  
*(prophetic parts)*  
and  
the book of the  
REVELATION

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# THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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## A CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPHETIC PARTS OF THE BOOK.

I think the best introduction to the prophetic study of this book is the first chapter. It is not necessary to be clever at conundrums to understand prophecy, nor to be acquainted with history outside the Bible either ancient or modern, except it may be for a few details. God has provided all the history, past and future, in His own book ; and the symbolisms are all explained for us. But the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

Daniel himself is a wonderful example. Quite young when he was taken to Babylon, and that not for his own sins but because of the sins of the nation of Israel generally, he soon made manifest, like Joseph, that *God was with him*. His purpose of heart in ch. 1.<sup>8</sup> is a stimulus to us all, and throughout his life he continued steadfast. It is true that God wrought wonderful deliverances for him and his friends, but they did not know that they would be delivered, they faced death calmly and solidly (ch. 3.<sup>16-18</sup>).

There is a very precious encouragement hidden in the names of Daniel and his friends, and when the meanings of those names are realized we can understand why Nebuchadnezzar gave them other names, after the names of his own gods.

*Daniel* means "My Judge (is) God". This surely was shewn to be his standpoint all through. He shewed that he recognized no other god as his judge, that he knew he had to give account to Him, and that all others would have to, and that he was confident that if he was faithful, even unto death, he would obtain a better resurrection. He could afford to put aside man's judgment as of very little account ; God was his judge and that was all that mattered. Not that he was disrespectful to those in authority, he recognized that God had appointed both their positions and his. This is a very different attitude from leaving till the judgment seat of Christ things that ought to be put right now.

*Hananiah* means the "grace of the LORD". Here is the starting point for everything. Those who make salvation to depend upon any merits of their own will certainly not understand this book. Nor is it sufficient to have just a mental acknowledgment of grace. We need to have such a view of the exceeding riches of His grace as to make us want to live only for His glory, and to desire the coming again of our Lord and Saviour for His sake, to see Him exalted.

*Mishael* means "Who (is) what God (is)". This is an expression of worship. *Michael* means "Who (is) like God". And similar words are found in Micah 7.<sup>18</sup> and Ex. 15.<sup>11</sup>, etc. He is glorious in holiness and wonderful in grace. Grace is His glory, and grace leads to worship. We may worship Him as Creator in some measure. But if we do not know His grace we cannot render the worship that He seeks.

*Azariah* means "the help of the LORD". The man who received his sight, in John 9, said, "If any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him he heareth." The godly Kings of Judah proved this throughout. The *help* of the LORD implies co-operation. So if we appreciate the grace of the LORD, and so are caused to worship Him, then we set ourselves to serve Him, then we shall experience His help. The title God, or the name LORD you will see occurs in each of these names; we can therefore appreciate that Nebuchadnezzar would not wish to hear those names continually in his court.

The Revelation is addressed to "servants" in the first chapter, the Book of Daniel sets forth the same principle in the names of Daniel and his three friends, and in their lives too. May we by God's grace be willing to follow their example.

## CHAPTER 2

### NEBUCHADNEZZAR DREAMS OF AN IMAGE.

For the purpose in hand we will commence this part of our study at ver. 28, taking it for granted that the other parts of the chapter will not be overlooked by those who read, for all Scripture has its value, though it may not need the study that prophetic interpretation does.

The first thing we notice is, that God was making known to the king by this dream what shall be in the latter days. This expression "the latter days", and similar ones occur in other interpretations as we go through the book and they need to be noted, because they shew that some things which certain expositors have interpreted as already fulfilled are still awaiting fulfilment in the future.

But why were things so far distant from Nebuchadnezzar's time revealed to him? We find the answer at the end of ver. 30, "and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart". On the basis of that statement it seems a warrantable inference that the vision of this image helped the king to have that great image, of the next chapter, set up and to command worship to it. So that we may conclude that the latent pride in the king's heart asserted itself on his hearing Daniel's words, "Thou art this head of gold". And we can trace this further by comparing ver. 37, where Daniel definitely declares that God had given him all this power and glory, with his boasting of what he himself had done in ch. 4.<sup>29-31</sup>.

But God accomplishes several things in one very often. Certainly the vision and the interpretation were made known for the benefit of those who would live in the times prophesied of, right through to the end.



But ver. 30 gives a further reason for the interpretation, it was for their sakes who should make it known. And although the margin gives an alternative reading for this, if we look back to verses 14-23 we see that the interpretation was given in answer to the prayer of Daniel and his three friends when they were in danger of being slain.

Reading on from verses 31 to 35 we get the dream itself first set out, thus satisfying the king that the interpretation was not mere invention on Daniel's part.

We notice that historically this image is not built from the feet up, but from the head down. And there is a reason for this, for it exactly expresses the facts concerning these four kingdoms that are symbolised. But we will first consider the materials of which it was made.

It is said of Nebuchadnezzar himself in ver. 38, "*Thou art this head of gold*". And the next kingdom is said to be "*inferior*"; and that was symbolized by "*silver*". This comparison of silver with gold is not a matter of riches possessed by the king, not a matter of military strength, nor of territory which he governed. It is the *quality* of the king's personal authority that is expressed. Ch. 5.<sup>19</sup> expresses this in the words "*whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive*". His was an absolute monarchy: it was not limited by any parliament, counsellors or advisors, he ruled absolutely. And the *inferiority* of the next kingdom is seen in that when King Darius wanted to keep Daniel alive he was not able to, because he was bound by his own decree, which he could not alter (ch. 6.<sup>5-16</sup>).

The fact that military strength is not intended in the gold is brought out in ch. 5.<sup>30, 31</sup>, for Darius the Median took the kingdom from his grandson Belshazzar.

And that it is not the amount of territory is seen from the map. The Medes and Persians took all the Babylonian Empire and added it to their own which extended right through to India (See Esther 1.<sup>1</sup>).

Now we need to notice that, although Nebuchadnezzar himself was said to be the head of gold, his son and his grandson also reigned over that kingdom before the "*silver*" kingdom displaced it. We therefore see that the "*head of gold*" is applied to the ruler who is in power at any particular time as well as to the dynasty. This should be remembered when considering the "*beasts*" of chapter 7 and the "*beast*" of Rev. 13.

From the passages we have now considered it is clear that the golden kingdom is Babylon, and the silver kingdom is the Medo Persian; and if we turn to ch. 8.<sup>20, 21</sup>, we see that the brass kingdom is the Greek. And the same rule as to inferiority applies all through. For, although the first king of Greece in ch. 8 may have had great personal power (Scripture does not say) at his death the kingdom was divided into four parts, under separate rulers.

And as to territory, just as the Persian added the Babylonian to its own, so the Grecian added both the others to its own.

We have now to consider the fourth. The identity of this, the iron kingdom, can only be established by comparison of passages in which certain facts are made clear. There are only four of these kingdoms, and in ver. 44 it is made clear that the kingdom of God will displace this fourth one. So that there is no room for any more than the four in the programme of God. The other three, each in turn, reigned over the Holy Land; and that is the essential point of this matter.

When the Lord was born, Joseph and Mary were away from their home in Nazareth because of a decree from Caesar Augustus (Luke 2.<sup>1-4</sup>) the Roman Emperor. And the references to Rome in the New Testament leave no doubt as to the identity of this iron kingdom which displaced the brass one—the Grecian. And no matter what other nations have ruled over Palestine since the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, that fourth one is the one that will be in power again when God's kingdom is set up on earth at the coming of Christ. Ver. 44 is clear as to that. We can therefore afford to dismiss from our minds all thoughts about Russia being "the King of the North."

Although iron is strong (ver. 42) it rusts away quickly and it is of little value compared with the other metals. But in addition to this the authority of the iron (the ruling element) is greatly weakened by being mingled with the "seed of men". In other words, the democratic element is strong and the authoritative voice of the head is thereby weakened. This iron and clay principle is particularly associated with the final stage of the ten king confederacy.

The word "together" in ver. 35 is important. It shews that the four kingdoms will all be involved in the final manifestation of the last one. When the Medo Persians conquered the Babylonians they as it were carried the weight (governmentally) of that which they annexed. And when the Grecians conquered the Persians they shouldered the responsibility of the other two. This is why the image is built downwards. And when the feet come into position Rome will be carrying the whole weight of the other three. Therefore, if the stone smites the feet of the image the whole crumbles.

Rome has never yet ruled over the Babylonian or Persian territory. Her power extended further to the west. But at the end her power will extend eastward beyond the Holy Land and embrace all the other three kingdoms.

## CHAPTER 7.

As we are confining ourselves to the prophetic study of this book, we pass chapters 4, 5 and 6, having noted the few points that are helpful to us in the interpretation of the prophetic visions, leaving the practical aspects of these chapters for meditation at other times, and pass to chapter 7.

Here we have a second view of the same four kingdoms, but presented with different characteristics. The metals in the image of a man would appeal to Nebuchadnezzar, to whom the dream was given.

But ch. 7 presents these kingdoms as wild beasts, which is God's view of man's rule, and fittingly is the view given in Daniel's vision.

In ver. 2 the first point is that the four winds of heaven strove upon the Great Sea. "The Great Sea" is the Bible name for the Mediterranean Sea, the centre of the then known world. Here is a view of the strife of men that has continued all down the centuries as one after another has sought after world domination : a strife that still continues and will continue—without success until Christ returns to set up His kingdom.

It was out of this sea that Daniel, in vision, saw these four beasts arise. Obviously these kingdoms have not actually risen out of the sea. But the sea, like the beasts is a symbol, and stands for the masses of the people (Rev. 17.<sup>15</sup>).

The first beast was like a lion, which signifies fierceness and strength ; and had eagle's wings, which signify swiftness, see Hab. 1.<sup>6-11</sup>.

The plucking of the wings and causing to stand upon its feet, as a man would, fit the experience that Nebuchadnezzar had as related in ch. 4.

The second beast was like a bear and it raised up itself on one side, or as the margin suggests "it raised itself up one dominion". The Medes and Persians ruled jointly, but though the Persians came up last, they afterwards excelled the Medes. I am not aware of any interpretation for the "three ribs" in its mouth, but the words, "Arise, devour much flesh" speak for themselves that the Babylonian (or Chaldean) kingdom was consumed by it.

The third beast was like a leopard, swift and stealthy in movement ; and it had four wings and four heads. These details are dealt with in the next chapter.

The fourth beast (ver. 7) is spoken of in terms that emphasize its terribleness above all else. And as we have proved that this beast is Rome, all that need be said is that the early Emperors of Rome have answered to this very definitely.

This beast had ten horns which like the ten toes signify ten kingdoms, as Rev. 17.<sup>12</sup> has shewn us. Then among these ten another "little horn" came up which uprooted three of the others, and this is the part that Daniel was particularly concerned about (and which is explained at the end of the chapter).

In ver. 9 we see that Daniel is carried right through the history of these kingdoms till the thrones were cast down, as one succeeded the other till the "little horn", the final one, was brought into judgment before the Ancient of Days (the Eternal God).

This term "the beast" we have seen can be applied to the whole kingdom or to the king who is reigning at any particular time. But in ver. 11 the final king, the "little horn", is spoken of in such a way as seems to make the term "beast" to mean the kingdom. But we

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See remarks on Zech. 5 in "The Book of the Revelation".

notice in passing that the destruction precedes the burning flame. They are not given to the burning flame to be destroyed—that is annihilated in the lake of fire. But like the “little horn” himself destroyed from off this earth and then cast into the lake of fire (2 Thess. 2.<sup>8</sup> and Rev. 19.<sup>20</sup>).

But the rest of the beasts, though their thrones were cast down, still had some dominion and continued to live as kingdoms (ver. 12) and they continue till this day, though the names in the Near East have changed.

. Treating ver. 12 as retrospective, because these beasts cannot have the dominion and lives prolonged after the judgment sits, for all four are to be destroyed together at the coming of Christ (ch. 2.<sup>35</sup>), we see that when this judgment takes place one like unto the Son of Man is brought forth to whom the kingdom is given for ever. Which compares with Rev. 5.

In the interpretation given in verses 18, 27, we see that the saints not only possess the kingdom, but they “take” it, hence we understand that the armies of heaven, in Rev. 19, are the glorified redeemed who have been raised at the first resurrection and come with Christ for the taking of the kingdom (as also Rev. 2.<sup>26, 27</sup>).

In interpreting this little horn Daniel is told that it shall devour all the earth. But Rome has never yet possessed either the Babylonian or Persian kingdom proper. And as they are necessarily part of the earth as it was then spoken of it must yet possess these parts, in addition to the extra territory possessed to the West, the extent of which we cannot foretell.

A further word concerning the saints of the Most High. “The Most High” is a term that is never applied to any but God. The saints are the “holy ones”. At the time when the little horn is wearing out the saints (ver. 25), any “holy ones” from Israel will be in the Church. Those who are sealed of Israel for earthly blessing in their own land will not be indwelt by the Holy Spirit till the day of the Lord comes in, at the coming of Christ (Zech. 12.<sup>10</sup>). And it is obvious that the little horn cannot be reigning in the day of the Lord. In other words the day of the Lord must begin after the tribulation, see Matt. 24.<sup>29, 30</sup> and Acts 2.<sup>19, 20</sup>.

## CHAPTER 8.

This chapter names the second and third kingdoms and so leaves no doubt as to their identification; apart from the fact that history has confirmed it.

Here the Medo-Persian kingdom is not represented by a wild beast, but by a ram. And the usual typological significance of a ram is a “shepherd”. This is seen in Ezek. 34. And in Isa. 44.<sup>28</sup>, Cyrus, king of Persia, is actually called God’s shepherd, because it was He who gave the decree for Jerusalem to be built and gave commandment for the protection and help of those whom he had released from cap-

tivity to go up to Jerusalem. See also Isa. 45.<sup>1-4</sup> and the book of Ezra. But the wild beast character is seen also in that the ram was seen pushing northward and southward and westward ; so that no beast could stand before him.

The shepherd character however is never forgotten by God ; and in the end time this kingdom will not only remain outside the dominion of the last beast, but will be used by God for the destruction of Babylon the seat of the Beast. See Rev. 16.<sup>12</sup> ; Jer. 51.<sup>11, 28</sup>.

Ver. 3, speaking of the two horns, shews the predominance of the Persians over the Medes though they rose to power after them.

The fact that this kingdom pushed westward beyond the bounds of the Babylonian kingdom seems to have caused the *he-goat*—Greece—to rise up and attack as ver. 5 describes. In fact ch. 11.<sup>2</sup> actually asserts it.

The significance of the he goat is seen in Ezek. 34.<sup>17</sup>—the false shepherds ; much the same as the bulls for pugnacity as in Psa. 22.<sup>12</sup> and Isa. 34.<sup>7</sup>. But when the remnant of Israel go out of Babylon they will not go as timid lambs, but as the bold defiant he-goats, for God will then deliver them (Jer. 50.<sup>8</sup>).

The one horn of this goat is the first King of Greece (ver. 21). And the four horns that came up after it are the four generals who had each a part of the kingdom after he died. Ver. 9 tells us of a “ little horn ” that came up out of one of the four, and waxed great. And this looks at first as if there are two little horns to arise, one out of Rome (ch. 7.<sup>8</sup>), and one out of Greece.

But in the case of the Christ there was a similar thing which caused the Pharisees to stumble. For though the Lord was born at Bethlehem in fulfilment of the prophecy of Micah 5.<sup>2</sup>, He was brought up at Nazareth and known as Jesus of Nazareth. See John 7.<sup>48-52</sup>. When Rome finally rises to power Greece will be included in that kingdom and by that means it can come to be that this final king will be identified with both.

Ver. 9, “ the pleasant land ” obviously refers to the Holy Land. But the casting down of some of the host of heaven, in ver. 10, refers to a *heavenly* people, not Israel. Stars are symbolic of prominent individuals of this heavenly calling, see Rev. 1.<sup>20</sup> ; and 12.<sup>1</sup>, where they represent the twelve apostles. The stamping upon them is the manifestation of the Devil’s hatred against the saints—the Church which will be tested through this final king, The Antichrist, the Man of Sin. This hatred seems to know no bounds and leads to his own doom, for he magnifies himself against the Prince of the host (ver. 25)—even the Lamb of God (Rev. 17.<sup>14</sup>).

He also takes away the daily sacrifice, of which we shall see more when we come to ch. 9. But there is an important point to be noted here, in ver. 12, he is allowed to do this because of the *transgression* of Israel at that time. This is described in Isa. 66.<sup>1-5</sup>.

In ver. 12 we read "it cast down the truth to the ground"; here is another reference to the Church, which shews that his hatred will be against both Israel and the Church, because he will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped (2 Thess. 2.<sup>4</sup>).

Concerning the two thousand three hundred days of ver. 14, we need to observe the marginal note that the days are, in the Hebrew, "evening morning" days. This is sufficient to rule out entirely the thought that these days represent years. They are literal days. And they count from the time when this king will assert himself as in 2 Thess. 2 and Rev. 13, which is the last three and a half years before the Lord comes. In the interpretation it is plainly stated in ver. 17 that the vision (relating to the little horn) is to be "at the time of the end"; and at "the latter time of their kingdom, when transgressors are come to the full". Such time marks should be taken account of all through these prophecies (verses 19, 23).

In ver. 24, the words "not by his own power", are explained by Rev. 13.<sup>2</sup>.

In ver. 25 "craft" is "craftiness", not craftsmanship.

And in ver. 26 "the vision of the evening and the morning" refers to the "evening morning" days of ver. 14.

One feels compelled to pause at the end of this chapter, to note the effect of these things upon the prophet himself. And the same is seen at the end of ch. 7 and in 10.<sup>8-21</sup>. In ch. 9 we note too the whole-hearted way in which Daniel set himself to seek the Lord (verses 1-23) and in ch. 10.<sup>2, 3</sup> likewise. It is no light thing to be a prophet; but "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him"; And God would not hide from Abraham the thing that He would do to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18.<sup>17-18</sup>).

## CHAPTER 9.

In ch. 8.<sup>26</sup> Daniel was told to "shut up" the vision because it was not to be fulfilled for many days, and similar words are used in the latter part of ch. 12. This indicates that the book cannot be fully understood, except in the light of subsequent history, and of the prophecies of the New Testament.

But the seventy weeks spoken of in 9.<sup>24-27</sup> are of great value in connection with the time of tribulation spoken of by the Lord in Matt. 24, which begins with the placing of "the abomination of desolation" (ver. 15) and couples up with Dan. 8.<sup>11, 12</sup>; 11.<sup>31</sup>; 12.<sup>11</sup>; 2 Thess. 2; and Rev. 13.<sup>14, 15</sup>.

These seventy weeks complete all that is determined upon the nation of Israel to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, to complete the prophecies and to anoint the most holy place of the rebuilt temple. Seventy weeks is less than a year and a half, which is sufficient to shew that these weeks cannot be understood literally. Ver. 25 gives us the solution in that sixty-nine (7 + 62) of those weeks

were fulfilled by the time Messiah was cut off: that is, the death of Christ. And, counting from the going forth of the commandment of Cyrus, the only possible explanation is that these weeks are weeks of years, i.e. one week is seven years.

From the words "the street shall be built again, and the walls, even in troublous times" the mistake has been made that these weeks are to be counted from the building of the wall by Nehemiah. But the prophecy does not say "from the building of the wall", but, "from the going forth of the commandment" to build Jerusalem. This commandment was by Cyrus. And though 2 Chron. 36 and Ezra 1 do not mention it, Isa. 44.<sup>28</sup> plainly says that Cyrus would perform *all* God's pleasure both as to the city and the temple. The forced stoppage of the work (Ezra 4.<sup>23, 24</sup>) led to a further decree by Darius on the basis of that of Cyrus, and after a further lapse a grant was made by Artaxerxes at the request of Nehemiah. But the appointed decree was by Cyrus, and that is the only way of finding agreement between the prophecy and history. (Ezra 6.<sup>1-12</sup>; Neh. 2.<sup>1-8</sup>).

The second lapse in the work, may have taken place forty-nine years after the decree of Cyrus, involving a work of destruction by the adversaries of which Nehemiah was informed later (Neh. 1). The marginal dates do not agree with this, but they are not inspired and are uncertain. There is evidently some incident of importance which is not specifically related in Scripture which is the reason why seven weeks are divided off from the other sixty-two in ver. 24.

However, the principal point is to establish that these weeks are weeks of years, which is also confirmed by the expression "weeks of days" in ch. 10.<sup>2</sup>, marg. Thus the Holy Spirit indicates where a thing is to be taken literally and where figuratively.

"The people of the prince that shall come" is the next thing to be decided. Obviously this cannot be the same Prince as in ch. 8.<sup>11</sup> and <sup>25</sup>, the Messiah never has and never will destroy the city and the sanctuary. But He prophesied the destruction in Matt. 22.<sup>7</sup> and 24.<sup>2</sup>. This was fulfilled by the Romans in A.D. 70. Thus by the New Testament prophecies we see that Rome is the final power to dominate the Holy Land before Christ's return. And be it noted it is not the prince himself that destroys it but his people: that is, the Roman people destroyed it, the prince is yet to come—the "little horn". This is evident from what follows.

Therefore this prince is yet to come . . . . .

Reading on we see that in the midst of this week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. That clearly implies that the covenant

was with Israel and permitted them to have their temple worship and sacrifices. And obviously the covenant is broken three and a half years before it expires. Two words here, "abominations" and "desolate" cannot but remind of Matt. 24.<sup>15</sup>, and the word "consummation" also reminds of Matt. 13.<sup>40</sup> when we are aware that the word "end" is actually *consummation*, a period in which all the purpose of God will be *summed up together*, to bring in the "everlasting righteousness" of the kingdom of God. That is as far as this chapter takes us, further details will appear in ch. 11.

There are, however, a few words to be said on ch. 10, in addition to what has been said about Daniel's personal experience. In verses 12-13 the angel says that he had been hindered from coming to him by the prince of the kingdom of Persia, who withstood him for one and twenty days—the three weeks of ver. 2. So that although the angel was sent as soon as Daniel began to seek the Lord, an evil spirit set himself to oppose him and was successful for those three weeks. Then in ver. 20 the angel, having delivered his message, was to go forth to fight with the prince of Persia and the prince of Grecia would come to oppose him also.

This wonderful revelation of the spirit world is of great importance. Eph. 6.<sup>12</sup> speaks of *our* conflict with evil spirits, but here we have their opposition to the angels of God, and are even allowed to prevail for a time.

We can appreciate that these unseen powers of evil would be opposed to God's revelation of what would transpire concerning these kingdoms, for it was in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia. And we are not surprised if they had power to cause some of Daniel's trials of body, just as they sought his destruction through the human princes in ch. 6.<sup>4-9</sup>. We remember how the Devil was allowed to afflict Job; and God's permission of the interruption of the angel may have been with a view to testing and demonstrating the reality of Daniel's heart. And without being prophets we do well to realize that the Devil will mark the one who sets himself to know and do the will of God with a whole heart, and God may allow his hindrances and afflictions for our refining and to give us the opportunity of laying up treasure in heaven. See ch. 11.<sup>35</sup> and 12.<sup>3</sup>.

In the last verse of ch. 10 Michael (the archangel) is said to be "your prince": and in 12.<sup>1</sup> he is said to be "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people". But it is wrong to infer that therefore the book of Daniel refers only to the Jews. Michael is definitely associated with the catching up of the Church in 1 Thess. 4.<sup>16</sup> (the archangel).

## CHAPTER 11.

This chapter is of great importance with regard to the end time, but it needs close consideration in order to understand it clearly. The Holy Spirit has been given to "lead us into all truth", and "shew us



things to come ” ; but not by inspiration or revelation, but by careful attention to all the details of the revelation which He *has* given by inspiration through the prophets, whether in the Old Testament or the New. And a careful comparison of one with the other will help us largely to avoid wrong conclusions about any particular statements.

The first four verses are a further confirmation of what is symbolised in ch. 8 in the ram and the he-goat : and is past history, fulfilled before the fourth kingdom—Rome—came into prominence. But nothing is said in this chapter about a kingdom succeeding the Grecian one and the wording reads on as if the king of the North were a later king of Greece. But as we read on to the end it becomes clear that this last king can be none other than the little horn of the fourth beast of ch. 7.<sup>8</sup>. We have however seen that the little horn of ch. 8.<sup>9</sup> which comes up in one of the four on the he-goat, is the same as the one in 7.<sup>8</sup>. And that by Rome's possession of the whole of the south of Europe this final king, the little horn, will be identified with both Greece and Rome.

Ver. 5 is marked in the Common Version as if it commenced a fresh section. But it is not so divided in the Hebrew. Ver. 6, by the clause, “ And in the end of years ” makes the division at this point. We can therefore leave ver. 5 as past history, and even if the details cannot be explained we can at least see *here the rise to power of the king of the south.* And though two thousand years or more of history have passed and Egypt has for a long time been but an insignificant power, it becomes plain that it will become strong again at the time of the end.

The term “ the end of years ” in ver. 6 should be distinguished in our minds from other terms such as “ the end ”, and “ the time of the end ” in verses 27, 35 and 40. The end of *years*, suggests that there is a considerable period involved in this prophecy, which is also seen in ver. 13 where it is said “ after certain years ” after the events mentioned in the verses before.

We can thereby see that prophecy here begins a fairly long time before the “ seventieth week ” of ch. 9.<sup>27.24</sup> A fact which makes a real difficulty for those who teach that the Lord may come at any moment.

The agreement spoken of in ver. 6 implies that Egypt will become strong some years before the time of the end, and the incidents mentioned shew that the years will be a considerable number.

But the agreement will not be obtained, for it seems that the king of the North will act treacherously, and thus create a war which results in his own defeat, as indicated in verses 7 and 8.

Reading on, ver. 10, “ But his sons ” looks at first as if it referred to the king of the South. But when we reach ver. 11 it becomes clear that the king of the North having died before the king of the South, the sons of the King of the North will be stirred up, but the king of the South will prevail despite the fact that a great multitude is set forth against him by the king of the North. This will cause his heart to be

“lifted up”, but he will not be strengthened by it (ver. 12) for the king of the North will return and prevail (verses 13-16).

In ver. 16 we also see that the Holy Land will be consumed by this king: which draws attention to the fact that all these wars between North and South involve the Holy Land for these armies will pass through there to reach their objectives.

When we see that these things are to happen before the Church is taken up to meet the Lord in the air, we appreciate that they will be of great interest to the Lord's people, and surely they ought to speak to us now, as a call to unity in faith and practice with a view to our Lord's coming.

“The daughter of women” in ver. 17 seems to be left unexplained for time to make clear. One wonders whether there is any connection here with Rev. 17; but nothing definite can be said.

“The prince” of ver. 18 is also unexplained, but there is strong evidence later that he is a ruler of Israel who by that time will have obtained possession of the whole of their land West of Jordan.

The fall of this king of the North is foreshewn in ver. 19, but verses 20 and 21 reveal two more kings of the North who succeed him, and the last of these is the one who continues until he is destroyed by the coming of our Lord. Thus there are altogether four kings of the North in this chapter, verses 6, 10, 20 and 21. The last three of these are mentioned in Isaiah 14.<sup>29</sup> as “the serpent”, the “cockatrice” and the “fiery flying serpent”; shewing the last to be the worst.\*

Looking back, ver. 14 seems to mean that some of the enemies of Israel (Daniel's people), becoming acquainted with certain parts of prophecy, assert themselves against them; but God will overrule that the prophecy is not fulfilled before the time.

We have seen that all this is to be fulfilled “in the end of years” (ver. 6), and therefore, the interpretation offered by some that this chapter is past history does not stand. And furthermore that interpretation necessitates making the “few days” of ver. 20 to mean “few years”, which is an example of the way in which the “year-day” theory is so misapplied to prophecy.

The words “in his estate” occur in four places in this chapter, verses 7, 20, 21 and 38. The last three are the same using the preposition “upon” (translated “in”). They can be seen from the context to mean *in the place of the other*, ver. 38 meaning that this king will honour a god of forces whom his fathers knew not instead of the God whom his fathers knew. This God of forces seems to be none other than the Devil, the Dragon of Rev. 13.<sup>4</sup> who gives his power to him.

But in the ver. 7 instance there is no preposition at all. And there must be a reason for this, possibly meaning “for his own estate”.

From ver. 21 there is no other king of the North mentioned to the end of the chapter. And we have here the counterpart of what has

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\* See pamphlet “Tophet” by the author.

already been predicted of the little horn. When the identification of these three kings with those in Isa. 14 is seen it becomes clear that by the time the first of them arises the Roman power will have taken possession of all the countries north of Palestine as far east as Babylon; for Isa. 14 speaks of them as "king of Babylon". But Russia is no more "King of the North" than Cape Colony is "King of the South".

The first thing said of this king is that he is "a vile person" (ver. 21); and he obtains the kingdom by flatteries. He overflows those who oppose him, which includes the prince of ver. 18 who repulsed his predecessor. In v. 22 this prince is called "the prince of the covenant", who is overcome but allowed to continue by the making of a league. This seems to be a clear reference to ch. 9.<sup>27</sup> But this vile person is not to be trusted, for he immediately begins to work deceitfully (ver. 23). By craftiness he establishes himself in the land in preparation for an attack upon Egypt, which the King of Egypt tries to resist but fails because of treachery; though he is no more to be trusted than the king of the North. The disregard of agreements by various powers at the present time demonstrates the kind of working there will be (ver. 27.)

The "league" of ver. 23. permits the Jews to continue their sacrifices, and when we see that he is dominated at first by the "woman"—Rome ecclesiastical—in Rev. 17 it is evident that at that point he allows religious freedom. But that is only to gain popularity until he gets sufficient power to assert himself. So by flattery and deceit he becomes strong, fully purposed to break that league as soon as he is able. This he does "in the midst of the week" (ch. 9.<sup>27</sup>), thus leaving three and a half years, forty-two months or twelve hundred and sixty days to be fulfilled before the day of the Lord commences. (See ch. 7.<sup>25</sup>; Rev. 11.<sup>2, 3</sup>; 12.<sup>6, 14</sup>; 13.<sup>5</sup>).

When the league (or covenant) with Israel is broken, their sacrifices will be stopped by compulsion, the whole system of Christendom as it now stands will be dissolved and all the world will be required to worship him alone (verses 28, 30, 32; ch. 8.<sup>11, 12</sup>; 11.<sup>36-39</sup>; 2 Thess. 2.<sup>3, 4</sup>). He will place the abomination that maketh desolate (Dan. 11.<sup>31</sup>; Matt. 24.<sup>15</sup>; Rev. 13.<sup>14-17</sup>).

But his edict will not accomplish all he intends. There will be a remnant of Israel who will not agree to receive the mark. These will be marvellously preserved through that time of trouble, and through the vials of wrath that follow (12.<sup>1</sup>; Isa. 66.<sup>1-5</sup>), and will become the Israel of the Millennium over whom the Lord will reign on the earth. (See Isa. 10.<sup>20, 23</sup>; Zech. 12.<sup>1-10</sup>; 13.<sup>8, 9</sup>; 14.<sup>1-3</sup>; Rev. 7.<sup>1-6</sup>).

There will also be some of the nations who will not submit to him (Rev. 16.<sup>12</sup>; Jer. 51.<sup>27, 28</sup>).

The Church of course will not receive his mark, but will flee from Jerusalem as soon as the abomination of desolation is set up (Matt. 24.<sup>15-22</sup>; Rev. 12.<sup>6, 14</sup>) and be preserved till the Lord comes, though some will be put to death (Dan. 11.<sup>33</sup> particularly referring to the

“teachers”, for they will be the ones to receive special attention). But ver. 35 shews the purifying effect that persecution will have, as it always does, that the Lamb’s wife may make herself ready for the marriage.

There will also be others among the Gentiles who will not receive the mark who will befriend the saints though they themselves are not actually saved. These are seen in Matt. 25.<sup>31, 46</sup>. They are not acquainted with the principle of “Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou Me”; But the Lord will recognize it, and will reward them accordingly when He has established His Kingdom on the earth. Then they will be brought into the kingdom and those who profess their own righteousness but have never shewn a heart “purified by faith” will be cast into everlasting fire to await the last resurrection of Rev. 20.<sup>12</sup>.

Many of the mere professors (the tares in Matt. 13) will be destroyed during the tribulation period in the judgments of the “seals” and “trumpets”, but not all, as we see in Matt. 25.

Returning to Dan. 11, ver. 41, shews us that Edom and Moab and Ammon will escape for a time. But Psa. 83 shews them to be included in the final confederacy of ten, and the three that are “plucked up by the roots” are thus replaced.

Finally he will subdue Egypt (verses 42, 43); but he will not be allowed to accomplish his desire upon Palestine, for the tidings of the destruction of his own capital Babylon will reach him (verses 44; Jer. 51.<sup>25-33</sup>; 50.<sup>44</sup>; Zech. 12.<sup>1-9</sup>; Rev. 16.<sup>6</sup>; 19.<sup>11-21</sup>) and very quickly the Lord will appear in glory and the King of the North and all his armies will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 38 and 39). Truly “he shall come to his end and none shall help him,” But the Lord will be glorified before all the nations.

## CHAPTER 12.

It is at that time (the time of the end) that the remnant of Israel will be delivered, that is those who survive that time of trouble (ver. 1). But ver. 2 speaks of a resurrection, not of *all*, but of *many*. Nowhere do we find an actual statement that good and bad will be raised together at the first resurrection. Some read the thought into a number of passages, but Rev. 20.<sup>4-6</sup> definitely asserts the opposite, and the passage is not capable of any other meaning than that which is seen on the surface. Dan. 12.<sup>2</sup> is however capable of a better translation which removes the seeming contradiction of Rev. 20.<sup>4-6</sup>.

We have noticed that “many”, not all, are raised. But Rom. 2.<sup>6-16</sup> leaves no question that all will be raised in due time.

The word “*some* to everlasting life and, *some* to shame” give the impression that some of the many who are raised will be appointed to shame and everlasting contempt. But the word is actually “these” and by considering the word in the margin of Isa. 6.<sup>3</sup> for “one cried

to another", and in Dan. 2.<sup>43</sup> for "one to another", we see that the meaning of Dan. 12.<sup>2</sup> is "these" (the many who are raised) are to everlasting life, and "these" who are not raised are to shame and everlasting contempt. So these are the same ones as those in Rev. 20.<sup>4-6</sup>, the first resurrection, including all the saved from Abel to the coming of Christ. (See also Heb. 11.<sup>40</sup>; 12.<sup>22, 23</sup>, the general assembly including those of ch. 11.)

Ver. 3 speaks of "they that be wise", and the margin says "teachers". This is the same word as in verses 33 and 35 the understanding ones. Some of these will fall by the sword and, will therefore be in the first resurrection, when the general assembly will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

There is no suggestion anywhere of a saved people during the tribulation period other than the Church of the present time. The only remnant of Israel mentioned in Scripture for that time are an earthly people who do not recognize Jesus as their Messiah till they see Him come in the clouds for us. (See Zech. 12.<sup>10</sup>; Rev. 1.<sup>7</sup>, the latter being the hope of the Church.)

The Church returns to heaven with the Lord after meeting Him in the air, hence the remnant of Israel mourn. But while the marriage supper is taking place in heaven, the vials of wrath are poured out upon the earth, and immediately after that the Lord will descend for the deliverance of the remnant of Israel and the establishment of His Kingdom. This has been explained more fully in the portion on the Revelation.

As has been noted before, God in His wisdom has seen fit to hold back much of the revelation concerning the last days till the suitable time arrives. So Daniel is told to seal the book even to the time of the end (ver. 4). And surely the time has come when many are running to and fro, and knowledge has been increased. We may well ask ourselves, are we as zealous for the knowledge of the things which the grace of God has made ours as the world is for its own?

The expression "the holy people" in ver. 7 is the same as in 7.<sup>27</sup>, "people of the saints", and in 8.<sup>24</sup>, "the holy people". This must refer to the Church, because, the remnant of Israel must be preserved in the land for the Lord to come and deliver them (Zech. 12.<sup>1-9</sup>). The Church will reign with Christ in *resurrection* glory. The remnant of Israel will be preserved in natural bodies. And this "scattering" agrees with the principle of Matt. 24.<sup>16</sup>.

The establishment of the kingdom after Christ has descended and delivered the remnant of Israel will be in stages, as verses 11, 12 shew. The reign of the Beast is twelve hundred and sixty days (Rev. 13.<sup>5</sup>, 42 months); something not named is to take place at twelve hundred and ninety days (30 days later, ver. 11); a particular blessing is promised at 1,335 days (45 days later) and ch. 8.<sup>14</sup> says the sanctuary shall be cleansed at 2,300 days.

What that blessing will be we shall not know till we return and are here on the earth again with our Lord. But our hearts are warmed as we think of His joy in redeemed and restored Israel, those for whom His precious blood was shed as much as for us ; and we think of Jerusalem, over which He wept, saying, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ".

But Daniel himself will be in the first resurrection with us to share in the glorious reign of our gracious Lord and Saviour (ver. 13). The Old Testament saints being one company with us, Heb. 12.<sup>23</sup> (after ch. 11) and Matt. 8.<sup>11</sup>.

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# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

## CHAPTER 1.

<sup>1</sup> Not the revelation "concerning" (*peri*) Jesus Christ, but the revelation of Jesus Christ in the sense that God gave it to Him. We certainly have the revelation of Jesus Christ in ch. 19 in a special way, but the book as a whole concerns "*things* which must shortly come to pass".

God gave this revelation to His Son to shew it to His servants. This word "servants" is of great importance. Rom. 6.<sup>22</sup> leaves no doubt that we, of the present economy are servants as well as sons. Sonship does not rule out the position as servants. A son, if he is worthy of that description, renders the truest service, even as *The Son* of God has set the example. This word "servants" is one of a number that have been misused to make this book apply to an imaginary remnant of Israel who will be "called out" after the Church has been caught up. No, let us never forget that we are servants of the living God, a glorious privilege.

That the word "servants" should be used here, and not "saints", as is frequent in the Epistles is significant. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And the key of knowledge is obedience. When God was about to destroy Sodom, He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? . . . For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, . . ." (Gen. 18.<sup>17-19</sup>). If we try to make Scripture fit in with our practice, instead of yielding literal obedience, it is not surprising that prophecy shall also be perverted to fit some preconceived idea.

Let us settle it in our hearts at the outset that this book is for servants, and see to it that we are not shunning literal obedience to anything that the Lord has appointed.

"And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His *servant* John". This word "signify" is taken by some to imply that this is a book of "signs" which have to be interpreted. But if we look at other places where the word is used we find no such thing implied. John 12.<sup>33</sup>, "This He *said*, signifying what death He should die". John 18.<sup>32</sup> and 21.<sup>19</sup> are of the same character. The words were clear and needed no interpretation. We would hardly expect in Acts 11.<sup>28</sup>, that the prophet made deaf and dumb motions. He said plainly that the dearth

would come. And in Acts 25.<sup>27</sup> we know that Festus would not think of sending anything but a clear statement to Caesar of the charges laid against Paul. We therefore have no reason for regarding heaven in ch. 4.<sup>1</sup> in a figurative way, representing the high places, religiously or politically, on earth.

We ought, nevertheless, to recognize that there are many figures of speech, and visions which are symbolic which need to be interpreted; but there are many things which are literal and need no interpretation.

How then are we to decide which are symbolic and which are literal? First let us be clear that it is a book of REVELATION. If it all needed to be interpreted, or even the greater part of it, it would not be a revelation. And seeing that no interpretation is given for the greater part of it, we would be left to guess the meaning, and one man's guess is as good as another's. This, sad to say, has happened in many cases where "interpretations" of the book have been offered.

A few rules for guidance on this matter are suggested.

- (1) If a thing is said to be a sign, or figure, or parable, we know we must look for an interpretation.
- (2) A sign may, or may not, need interpretation. In Rev. 12.<sup>1</sup> it does: in Matt. 24.<sup>3</sup>, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" needs no interpretation, it is simply something unusual that happens to indicate the coming of an event.
- (3) Rev. 12.<sup>1</sup> is a case where *the nature of the case shews it to be figurative*. A woman in heaven, clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, *cannot* be literal.
- (4) In the case of a vision, some things may be literal and some figurative, e.g. In Rev. 1.<sup>20</sup> the "mystery" part is interpreted. The Person (ver. 13) is not figurative, therefore there is no interpretation. The "beast" in ch. 13.<sup>1</sup> is shewn to be a man by what follows. But the reader should also be acquainted with the book of Daniel, ch. 7 of which explains what the four beasts are. This will be gone into more fully when we come to ch. 13.
- (5) The principle is that Scripture indicates in some way, as shewn above, whether a thing is figurative or not. And if no indication that it is figurative is given we should take it literally.

Ver. 3, "Blessed is he that readeth". Not he that receives a human explanation, but he that readeth. In those days when only few could read, the majority had to depend on "hearing" what was read. But mark that the blessing depends on reading—not on explanation.\* Many are afraid to read it: possibly because of so many conflicting "interpretations" of it.

But let us note also the added words, "and *keep* those things which are written therein". Daniel *kept* the matter in his heart (Dan. 7.<sup>28</sup>).

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\* This attempt to help others to understand the book is the outcome of much reading of it, and because there are so many misinterpretations of it abroad today.



Mary *kept* those things in her heart (Luke 2.<sup>19, 51</sup>). They valued those things ; do we value the things in this book ? The sad ignorance concerning the book and its teaching clearly points in the other direction. Yet a special blessing is attached to it ; and God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, an angel and an apostle, all co-operated to give it to us.

The reason given for keeping those things is “ for the time is at hand ”. Is there not then the greater reason today for keeping those things in our hearts ?

Ver. 4 shews that the book was written to “ the seven churches ” in Asia. Not “ seven of the churches ” in Asia. There were only seven. Colosse and Hierapolis had ceased to be churches ; Paul had written to Timothy before this that all in Asia had turned away from him. God had, however, granted the recovery of seven. It is of the greatest importance to keep in mind that the book was written to seven churches existing at that time.

The greetings from “ Him which is, and which was, and which is to come ”, seem, from the context, necessarily to refer to the Father. The explanation being found in Ezek. 43.<sup>2</sup> where the glory that left the temple at the time of the Captivity (ch. 10.<sup>3, 4, 18</sup>) is seen to return. See also ch. 48.<sup>35</sup>.

“ The seven Spirits ” is an unusual expression for the Holy Spirit. But it seems impossible to make it refer to created spirits, because of its position between the Father and the Son. It may be explained by His ministry in the seven churches ; or by the manifold forms of His ministry, seven implying perfection. By way of comparison we might notice the plural “ sacrifices ” in Heb. 9.<sup>23</sup>, “ The heavenly things (purified) with better sacrifices than these ” may refer to the fact that the one offering of Jesus Christ answers to all the different offerings of the Law.

Ver. 5 associates the faithfulness of Christ on earth with His position of authority in resurrection. So it will be with His servants.

“ The first begotten of the dead ”. “ Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee ” (Acts 13.<sup>33</sup>), shews that God views resurrection to life as a new birth. The “ resurrection to damnation ” (John 5.<sup>29</sup>) is not so regarded ; it is “ the second death ” (Rev. 20.<sup>14</sup>). Not that they die a second time, death is a state in which they continue.

The greeting is *from* the three Persons of the God-head, Jesus Christ being mentioned last because of what follows, “ UNTO Him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood ”. May grace ever lead us to praise.

“ And hath made us a *kingdom*—priests unto God and His Father ; to Him be glory and dominion for ever ”. Amen. (lit.). The translation “ kings and priests would imply that each one would be a king. True, all that are Christ’s shall reign with Him, being members in His Kingdom, with positions according to faithfulness and suffering in the present time, but each one will not be a king. However we may all

be priests in our ruling positions then, even as we are priests now in the spiritual priesthood of 1 Pet. 2.<sup>5</sup>.

1 Thess. 4.<sup>16</sup> does not suggest secrecy but just the opposite. So here in ver. 7, "every eye shall see Him". The words "all kindreds of the earth" can just as literally be "all the tribes of the land". And it is the remnant of Israel that will mourn for Him when He comes to the air for us (Zech. 12.<sup>10</sup>).

The idea that these words, "every eye shall see Him", refer to His coming to the earth, and that we have met the Lord in the air earlier, before the tribulation; makes it necessary to explain and prove otherwise. The message was for the blessing of the seven churches in Asia at that time. They would be acquainted with Paul's view of the blessed hope as in 1 Thess. 4 and 5 and 1 Cor. 15. That John should suddenly introduce a view of the Lord's coming which did not affect *them*, and add the words "Even so, Amen" to it, without a word of explanation, requires a stretch of imagination too great to be allowed. He obviously referred to their own blessed hope, and expected them to echo his own "Amen".

Such a remnant of Israel as this school of interpretation supposes is not found in Scripture. Neither is there a suggestion of a "secret rapture".

There is a remnant of Israel to be saved for the reign of Christ on earth, an earthly people, not a resurrected or changed people, but they do not believe on the Lord Jesus till they see Him come to the air for us. Zech., chapters 12-14 shews this people and their deliverance. The Revelation only refers to this remnant once, in ch. 7, and that only to say that they are "sealed" to preserve them through the tribulation period. In ch. 20 where the thousand years reign of Christ is mentioned Israel is not mentioned at all.

The book is written for the Church of this age, a warning and preparation for that which she must face at the end time. It was written to the seven churches then existing in Asia; and as we advance into the construction of the book this will become abundantly apparent.

In ver. 8 it is (the) LORD that says, "I am Alpha and Omega". In ver. 11 Jesus Christ, the One like to the Son of Man claims the same. (The) LORD claims to be "the beginning and the end". Jesus Christ claims to be "the first and the last". He claims eternal existence with the Father. "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God". "And the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

Ver. 9. Tribulation was the normal experience then. It would be today if God's children were more faithful, and it will yet be again when we are once more united in His will before the Lord comes.

We in England, and those in the U.S.A. and the Colonies are being spared tribulation as a result of compromising with the world. Not because the Lord loves us too much to permit it. The Lord said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation". And they had it in the "Acts" period, and for centuries at the hand of Rome. And it is still the por-

tion of the faithful in lands where Rome dominates, and where Communism holds sway, and where Mahommedanism is strong. Believers in their comfortable circumstances need to have their eyes opened and their hearts stirred.

“ The kingdom and patience ” is now, we wait for “ the kingdom and glory ” (1 Thess. 2.<sup>12</sup>). John was actually experiencing this by being confined to Patmos “ on account of ” (not with a view to) the word of God ; and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. And the Lord did not liberate him to go to the seven churches with the message, but said, “ What thou seest, write in a book, and send it ”. The Lord does not always relieve us of suffering, sickness or strain, even when our hearts do not condemn us (1 John 3.<sup>21</sup>). He has purposes to accomplish of which we do not know. The refining of the “ gold ” is more precious than the removal of the trial. John will have “ a better resurrection ” for his continued suffering, and another had the privilege of service to the seven churches.

In ver. 10, the words, “ I was in the Spirit in *the Lord's day* ” have been misconstrued to mean “ in *the day of the Lord* ”. It cannot be over-emphasised that this is wrong from two standpoints. (1) It is impossible to be the day of the Lord while the Beast is reigning, see the *coming* of the day of the Lord in Joel 2.<sup>1-11</sup>. A large portion of the Revelation is concerned with the period of the reign of the Beast and the workings of God in that period. When the day of the Lord starts the beast will be destroyed (2 Thess. 2.<sup>1-8</sup>). (2) The usual expression for the day of the Lord is “ he hemera tou Kuriou ”. The English expression is a literal translation of this. But in Rev. 1.<sup>10</sup> it is “ te Kuriake hemera ”. The Greek has no apostrophe “ s ” ; so the adjectival form of the word “ Lord ” is used here, which is very exceptional, and obviously intended to make a distinction from “ the day of the Lord ”. In 1 Cor. 10.<sup>21</sup> it should be “ the cup of the Lord ” and “ the table of the Lord ”. But in 1 Cor. 11.<sup>20</sup> it is “ the Lord's Supper ” in strict accord with the Greek.

When John turned, he saw seven golden “ lampstands ” and in the midst One like unto the Son of Man. The likeness of Christ here to the “ Ancient of Days ” in Dan. 7.<sup>9</sup> shews the likeness of the Son of God to the Father. But He is not called “ Son of God ” here but “ Son of Man ”. He is the One mentioned in Dan. 7.<sup>13</sup>. And that this title does not imply a “ Jewish ” connection, as some teach, is clear in that it is associated with the seven churches of this age.

Ver. 16, “ a sharp two-edged sword ”, betokens judgment, but here it is judgment on the churches, not on the world

Ver. 17, John himself fell at His feet as dead at the sight of Him ; what would our feeling be if He suddenly appeared to us ? What about all our self-esteem and selfishness and all other works of the flesh ? Oh, to see ourselves more as He sees us. But the Lord's “ Fear not ”, and His right hand, that holds the seven stars, comfort and strengthen John. The one Who is the First and the Last and Who

is alive from the dead has power to sustain His servant as well as to use the sword in judgment. (Obviously the sword here is figurative of the power of His word.)

So John is told to write three things (ver. 19). The things which thou hast seen—the vision just described. The things which are—the letters to the seven churches. The things which shall be hereafter—those events which are recorded after ch. 3.

We are not left to interpret the symbols of verses 12 and 16 for ourselves. The Lord interprets them for us. So is it always. Scripture interprets its own figures. The seven lampstands are seven churches maintaining a light in seven cities, a contrast to the lampstand with its seven lamps in the tabernacle.

In ver. 18 the keys (plural) should be noted, two separate places are implied.

“The things which shall be hereafter” in ver. 19 have been taken to refer to a time *after* this dispensation is ended. It is true that the book does lead on to things after this dispensation, even to the new heavens and the new earth; but that does not warrant the assumption that *everything* in the book after ch. 3 is in a future dispensation.

The seven Epistles were to seven churches then existing; “the things hereafter” refer to the end of this age as well as after it, in contrast to the time when John was here.

Romanism had not then come into being, and though there were failures in individual churches, the corruption that Rome has brought about had not commenced. The inception of this system—the counterfeit of the bride—as seen in ch. 17, has affected and still affects the Christian position as a whole. Great changes have taken place since the Acts period, and greater changes will yet take place before the Lord comes. Whatever the readers’ view may be on this point, he is invited to read on and consider with an open mind, and allow the following chapters to bear their own testimony.

## CHAPTER 2.

Ver. 1. “Unto the *angel* of the church . . .”. That these angels are human beings is decided by “be *thou* faithful unto death” being addressed to the angel of that church (ver. 10).

At the beginning of the age “elders” were appointed to take responsibility in the churches. But in the later Epistles we find one individual in each church is responsible for the conduct of it, under the direction of an apostle. Timothy and Titus under Paul, and the seven angels (or messengers, as the word means) in Asia under John. Now that the apostles are no longer here, we should work on the line of 2 Tim. 2.<sup>2</sup> and Eph. 4.<sup>11-13</sup>, faithful men who will continue to shepherd the flocks till the Lord comes.

In these days the word “church” is being applied in a very loose way. 1 Tim. 3.<sup>15</sup> says that a church of God is “a pillar and ground of the truth”. Therefore a company that is holding error of any kind is

not a church. Some contend that the Scripture recognizes as churches such companies as Corinth and the seven in Asia though they were holding error. But the very ones who argue in this way would draw back from recognizing such as Corinth as a church. Both from the moral and doctrinal standpoint. "That which proves too much, disproves itself". Those who contend in this way do so to justify continuance in fellowship (?) with those with whom they do not agree. They fail to recognize the principle that God always gives time to repent. They ignore the repentance which the second Epistle to Corinth records, and the warning of Rev. 2.<sup>5</sup> and continue in a position where there is no likelihood of the rectifying of the wrongs. If we want to really be pleasing to our Lord in these days we must be prepared to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone for the truth's sake. If those who are exercised in heart humbly took this position we would soon see *churches*, according to the Scriptural pattern, raised up.

It is not the purpose of this work to go into all the details that afford helpful meditation in this the last of God's revelation to man. Points that call for praise, worship, self-examination or warning may be touched upon as we proceed ; but that side of the subject will be left generally to others in their own reading and meditation.

The purpose here is, by the application of sound principles of Bible exposition to give the reader something that will set him on right lines as to prophecy and thus lead him to the blessed hope as the Holy Spirit has given it, which will involve a right outlook on the development of things on the earth and a preparation for what is before us ; both as to suffering for the Lord's sake and the bringing about of that unity which is to be, in preparation for meeting with our glorious Lord.

This first Epistle—to the angel of the church at Ephesus—emphasises the seriousness of leaving our first love. Whether this is the most serious of all the failures in these churches we had better not attempt to say. The fact that it is the first mentioned would not prove it. A look at the map will shew that Ephesus would naturally be the first place to call at from Patmos. Then the order in which the Epistles occur follow the order in which the towns would be reached, as far as Pergamos. Then the others would be reached in order back to Laodicea.

However, there is no question about the importance of keeping our first love, nor of the vast amount that depends on love. How much value can there be in what we do for the Lord if *love* is not the motive power behind it ? Solomon was one but not the only one of the kings of Judah that failed in this at the end of his life. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

The earnestness and zeal, yea we may say severity of this angel are commended. They are not to be taken as the opposite of love. Paul protested to the Corinthians that his severity was not because he did not love them, but because he loved them. But it is possible to cultivate, unintentionally, an attitude of mind or heart which is occupied

with correctness only so such. Whereas 1 Cor. 13 shows that whatever we have or are, if we have not love, we are "*nothing*".

The angel at Ephesus however was not *without* love, but he had left his *first* love. A thing that may easily happen if we are continually confronted with opposition and false profession. Of the Lord Jesus it is written in Psa. 16, "I have set the Lord alway before Me : because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved". So may it be with us.

The removal of the lampstand (ver. 5) would mean that whatever might remain that bore testimony for Christ, there would not be a "church" for him to care for.

"The midst of the paradise of God" (ver. 7). This does not necessarily imply one tree in the centre. If we say *the oak tree* is very firm we do not mean only one, but that *variety* of tree. And in ch. 22.<sup>2</sup> we see there is an avenue of the tree of life, on either side of the river.

The word "midst" here also cannot mean one tree in the centre, obviously. So, in ch. 19.<sup>17</sup> "the fowls that fly in the *midst* of heaven". We may therefore gather that the tree of life will be found "throughout" this immense city. The same may apply to the garden of Eden also.

The word "paradise" is used for a large garden or park. It is used in Luke 23.<sup>43</sup>, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise", signifying that the place where the departed godly ones waited in Sheol (Hell) was known by that name.

But after the resurrection of the Lord, paradise is seen to be in heaven, "caught up into paradise" (2 Cor. 12.<sup>4</sup>). And combining these thoughts with the verse we are considering we may conclude that the Father's house of many mansions, the holy city, and the "paradise of God" are one and the same place. Here is food for meditation before we come to chapters 21 and 22.

We must not leave this Epistle without noticing the word "overcometh". It is the same in each Epistle, the promises are to the overcomers. What does it mean to overcome. In conflict we must either overcome or be overcome : and Eph. 6 shews us that the warfare is no light matter. We may also be assured that the nearer we get to God's appointed pattern for all things the more fierce will be the conflict. Ver. 8. The characteristic at Smyrna was, suffering for Christ. We do not read of suffering at Ephesus. Love and suffering go hand in hand. Poverty too. Yes, "but thou art rich" (ver. 9).

Blasphemy on the part of the Jews was common when the gospel was taken to them. See Acts 13.<sup>45</sup> ; 18.<sup>6</sup>. And Rom. 2.<sup>28</sup> tells us that he is not a Jew which is one outwardly. He is a Jew which is one inwardly. Hence they are called "the Synagogue of Satan".

The ten days of tribulation are of course literally "ten days". God sets a limit to Satan's activities, as He did in the case of Job. But the ten days was sufficient for some to be put to death. But a crown of life is promised to all such. The promise to the overcomer that he shall not be hurt of the "second death" has been taken to imply that if

one did not overcome he would be hurt of it, though truly a child of God. But such inferences are not to be allowed. To die for Christ is to overcome. To save one's life by compromise is to be overcome. And those who so act are regarded in Scripture as never having been born again. But the *object* of the statement is not to make this distinction, but to *comfort* those whose lot it may be to forfeit their lives, without saying anything of those who may not be called upon to make this sacrifice.

The words "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches" (plural) shew that these Epistles were to be circulated throughout the seven churches so that each church would read all the seven. "What the Spirit saith" shews the further co-operation of the Holy Spirit to that which is seen in ch. 1.<sup>4</sup>. It is the Lord that walks through the churches and He himself addresses them; but the Holy Spirit goes with the written word and makes it effectual in those that "have an ear to hear".

PERGAMOS, ver. 12, stands out in history. The priest kings of the sun worship at Babylon removed to Pergamos, and from there, after the time of John's writing, removed to Rome and took positions of prominence in the church there. They introduced their heathen rites and feasts and gave them new names to fit the events of importance in the Christian faith. Thus the feast that celebrated the lengthening of the days in December was renamed "Christmas" and the Spring festival of "Easter" became associated with the Passover, to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ. In these and many other "days" in the "state church" calendars can be traced the relics of heathendom of centuries before Christ was born. The fleshly indulgencies that characterised these feasts were thus introduced and the church at Rome was soon brought down to the level of heathendom. Wicked men came into power and gradually combined spiritual (?) authority with political, developing into the succession of "Popes" whose history is too shameful to mention. The faithful were thus forced out and were persecuted. But God gave grace so that they suffered terrible tortures unto death, rather than acknowledge the wicked system that gathered to itself the power and wealth of many countries; and further corrupted and perverted the true teaching of the apostles until the system became, and still remains, one large counterfeit.\*

The twofold emphasis in ver. 13, "where Satan's seat is" and "where Satan dwelleth", can be understood in view of the fact that those priests were then living there. The reference to the doctrine of Balaam can be understood by reading the chapters in Numbers that record his doings leading up to the evils of ch. 25 which brought God's judgment on the people of Israel. This is the kind of thing that these priests introduced at Rome. But there was also a beginning of it at Pergamos.

The deeds and doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (verses 6 and 15) are not

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\* See "The Two Babylons" by Hyslop.

described. No doubt it is for the best that they are not. But it indicates the working of Satan in those times, even while the apostles, or at least John, was still living. Therefore God again calls to repentance.

What the "white stone" signifies we may not know; but the fact that it is not in a figurative context implies that it refers to some common practice. Some suggest that it is associated with voting. But what we can see is that the manna is "hidden", and the name in the stone is only known to the one that receives it. There is therefore an aspect of secrecy. And again we are reminded that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. How blessed to be in His secret. Do we covet it sufficiently to suffer for Him?

THYATIRA, ver. 18, was in almost as bad a state as Pergamos. It seems that there was actually a woman named Jezebel there, and surely the name was fitting. The same sins are recorded as in the last case, and God warns of judgment if there is not repentance. But in ver. 16 it is directed against "them", the priests: whereas in verses 21-23 it is directed against "her" and her associates and her children.

We see from ver. 24 that it was a commendable thing that some had not known the depths of Satan as they spoke. A lesson for us, not to pry into evil. Things once seen and heard remain with us and keep asserting themselves for the remainder of our lives.

"Till I come" (ver. 25) presents the usual standpoint of the Epistles. "Till He come" in 1 Cor. 11.<sup>26</sup> and "we which are alive and remain" in 1 Thess. 4 illustrates it. They did not know how long it would be, His coming was the blessed hope. If death intervened it made no difference to the standpoint. And they certainly will not cease to hold fast after departing to be with Christ.

The promise to the overcomer, in verses 26, 27 is rather startling. But it shews that when we are "changed" into the image of Christ we shall be free from all the law of sin that is in us at present, so that we shall be able to carry out God's judgment from God's standpoint perfectly. We are not fit, nor is it the time, to do it now.

"The morning star" is the comfort of the night watchman, the shepherd and the mariner, that the day is at hand. The "day star" in 2 Pet. 1.<sup>19</sup> is different. It is literally the "light bearer" or "light bringer" which comes when the day dawns. It corresponds to the Sun of Righteousness in Mal. 4.<sup>2</sup>. The morning star shines while it is still night. The Lord will not come in the "night", but we must wait for Him until the day breaks (Song of Songs 4.<sup>6</sup>) when He will come as the Sun of Righteousness. In the meanwhile He is to us the Morning Star, shining in the night and keeping the blessed hope ever bright in our hearts.

### CHAPTER 3.

At the beginning of each Epistle we find the Lord addresses Himself to the "angel" in a way that is suitable to the conditions found in that church. Pergamos and Thyatira have Him presented in the severe



judgment aspect the sword, the eyes as a flame of fire, the feet as fine brass. Smyrna ; as the one Who was dead and is alive. This fits with the words " Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life ". And shall " not be hurt of the second death ". At Sardis the angel had " a name to live and was dead ". These words can hardly be taken to mean that he was unregenerate, because of the context. He is one of the seven stars which the Lord held ; that suggests security. Ver. 2 is a charge that could hardly be given to a mere professor. His works were not altogether rejected—they were not " perfect " or " complete ". And in ver. 3 he is called upon to repent, as other " angels " were. It seems therefore that " thou hast a name to live and art dead " means that he had sunk into a practically fruitless experience. Compare 1 Tim. 5.<sup>6</sup>.

It is important to bear in mind that the Epistles are addressed to the " angels "—not to the churches. This shows that the Lord held them responsible. We should therefore notice that the pronouns " thou ", " thee " and " thy " refer to the angel. Whereas " you " in 2.<sup>24</sup> refers to the company.

The angel at Sardis was personally in a very low state consequently we are not surprised if the company was low too. But there were a *few* which had not defiled their garments and they had the corresponding promise of walking with the Lord in white.

The promise " I will not blot out his name out of the book of life ", should not be taken to imply that some names in the Lamb's book of life will be blotted out. It is wrong to argue from a negative to a positive in this way. It is a word of encouragement to the over-comers that if they were cast out in this world they would not be blotted out of His book.

PHILADELPHIA with Smyrna are the two most encouraging. " The Holy and True ", having the " key of David ", and power " to open and shut ", shews Him to be the One Who is " all-sufficient " to those that trust and obey Him. The key of David may have a reference to Isa. 22.<sup>15-25</sup>.

Eliakim was appointed to take the place of Shebna, and thus becomes a type of Christ, who will oversee David's house in the future. But at present He is God's servant over His own house (Heb. 3.<sup>6</sup>) and can therefore minister all that is contained in His treasures to meet the need of His faithful servants. Like Eliakim, He can open and none can shut, and shut and none can open. So because those at Philadelphia had " kept His word " he had opened a door for them and no man could shut it.

Ver. 9 has another reference to the Synagogue of Satan. The Jews, despite their sins, still regard themselves as God's elect people. But the Lord promises, He does not say when, but we may assume from ch. 2.<sup>26</sup> that it will be in resurrection, that they will " come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved *thee* ". If the

angel were himself a converted Jew this would be the more forceful seeing that they abhor one of their own who becomes a Christian.

The word "worship" here obviously must have a meaning different from when it is used of worshipping God. But 1 Chron. 29.<sup>20</sup> gives us another instance where the word is used similarly: "they worshipped the LORD and the king." Here the one word is used for the worship of both. They worshipped the king as king, and they worshipped God as God. It helps us to appreciate something of what God has prepared for those who bear the reproach of Christ now. Poor rebel sinners redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Ver. 10 has become a ground of controversy. There is a system of interpretation which regards these seven Epistles in a figurative way which eclipses the fact that they were seven actual churches at that time. It takes each Epistle as representing a phase of the whole Church on earth at different times in historical order: Philadelphia and Laodicea being supposed to continue together to the coming of the Lord. It looks very plausible, but believers are advised to shun it. It does not agree with truth.

The promise "I also will keep thee out of the hour of temptation", is taken to mean that the Lord will keep those who are alive at the end of this age out of the tribulation, by taking up the church before that tribulation commences. If we keep in mind the fact that this was a promise to the angel of an actual church at that time, we see how inappropriate such an interpretation is. What would be the value of the Lord promising to keep one out of that tribulation when He knew he would die hundreds of years before it came?

There have been periods of trial, testing, temptation and tribulation all through the Church's history. And just as there were ten days of tribulation appointed to Smyrna, so there was an hour (a period) of *temptation* coming upon the then known world, out of which this angel was promised to be kept.

Ver. 11. We are never beyond the danger of backsliding. Though we are secure as to eternal life, if truly born again, another may take our crown of reward in that day. Let us hold fast against all enticements and opposition.

LAODICEA is the last of the seven. These present days, are often spoken of as the Laodicean age. These seven Epistles shew that there can be a "luke-warm" condition in one place and a fervent zeal of love in another at the same time. There can also be a luke-warm condition in one individual and a heat of love in another in the same place. Let us judge ourselves and not excuse ourselves on the ground of the "age" we live in.

But though the Epistle to Laodicea is the last here, and some, on the figurative and historical theory, assert that it will be the condition of the end of this age, ch. 12 shews just the opposite. There will be strength and love in a manifest unity among God's people at the end.

If you want to cause war—talk of war. If you want to cause defeat—talk of defeat. If you want to cause unity in the truth—talk of it, work for it, pray for it, expect it. God has promised it, Praise Him !

Note again that the Epistle is written to the angel himself, “*thou art neither cold nor hot*”. Let us examine ourselves individually.

Ver. 17 can hardly be taken to refer to material things. One could hardly be poor and blind and naked without knowing it. The view then is one of the person who is, as he thinks, rich in spiritual things, and has need of nothing. There are such about. You can’t teach us anything. Our godly leaders and teachers could not have been wrong. Stay. Godly men have differed. And if ten men do not agree as to *truth*, nine must be wrong—for there is only one truth. Ah, but our man is right. So they *all* say. But if nine are wrong there is no guarantee that the tenth is not also. We should entertain no thoughts approaching to infallibility. And the “I am rich . . . and have need of nothing” attitude, in spiritual things, is in itself a sure sign of poverty.

Ver. 18. “I counsel thee to *buy*”. Note that word “buy”. It applies to all three, gold, clothing, eyesalve, all have to be bought. They are not given. (Later manuscripts read “and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes”). How much did it cost you to get the spiritual “riches” that you now enjoy ? The best things are imitated, not the worst. Satan is a masterpiece of this, and none of us are proof against his suggestions to the mind (2 Cor. 2.<sup>11</sup>). And apart from his suggestions, the best of men have made mistakes. If you buy something of gold you look for the hall mark. Have you been careful about those “nuggets” that came to you so cheaply ? There is no hall-mark on a nugget, did you have it tested ? But one thing is sure, if you buy of Christ, you can depend on it. But sometimes the most spurious things are accompanied by the claim to revelation—“The Lord shewed me”. “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Prov. 23.<sup>23</sup>). And to get it you will have to buy it even of the Lord Himself.

The clothing (spiritual) which you value so much, may be in itself but a manifestation of the flesh (Isa. 59.<sup>6</sup>), cobwebs of self-righteousness, pride (of spiritual position), “I know”. “You cannot teach me”. “If you were as humble as I am, you would see it as I do”. Oh, let us beware !

Even the eyesalve has to be bought ; and it may be we need to start there, that we may see our poverty and nakedness. What are we willing to pay ? Are we willing to part with some of our earthly riches ? Overtime, or that which is obtained in a way that hardly bears the light ? Or our pleasures ? or our friends ? Are we prepared for time for real prayerful study and testing of things ? Are we prepared to mortify self and be corrected ? The eyes like a flame of fire are upon us. We may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive Him.

Ver. 19. Do we hear His loving voice in chastening ? Or do we despise the rod (Micha 6.<sup>9</sup>). *He* does not want to leave it till He sits at the judgment seat.

Ver. 20 presents a sad picture, are we willing to open the door to Him ? It implies a willingness to obey His words (John 14.<sup>21, 23</sup>). Are we willing for that ? What a state of heart that shuts *Him* out !

Ver. 21. The Lord's own throne here is contrasted to His Father's throne. It is the throne of David, when He reigns on the earth. Then we shall reign with Him. We cannot sit in God's throne. A created being can never become God. But the One Who is God, and became man, can sit in that throne. As Man, the Lord can occupy David's throne, and we, as men, can sit with Him. What grace, what glory !

To sit with him there, is a *reward* for overcoming ; but grace laid the foundation in redemption and made it possible for us to do it. What are positions in this world compared with that ? Shall we not give up and buy the true riches ?

The Lord addresses Himself to this angel as " The faithful and True Witness ". What a contrast to one whose spiritual " riches " amount to being " wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked ". How could one in such a state set forth the spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ ? He could not possibly be a faithful and true witness.

The Lord is also " the beginning of the creation of God " here. This has been, and is, used largely by some to make out that Christ was the first being that God created. It is not the purpose here to write a full discourse on the deity of Christ. Let it suffice to shew a few points as to the meaning of this title.

We have already seen in ch. 1 that the Lord Jesus takes exactly the same titles as the LORD in Isaiah. In none of those passages is He the beginning of anything. Just as God the Father is the beginning and ending in His existence, so is Christ. We must therefore examine this statement to see the harmony with other passages ; not accept a meaning that makes it contradict them.

The word " beginning " in Greek has a wide meaning. It can mean " chief ", " source ", and so in effect the " beginner ". It is translated " corner " in Acts 10.<sup>11</sup> ; " magistrate ", Luke 12.<sup>11</sup> ; " power ", Luke 20.<sup>20</sup> ; " principalities " (8 times) e.g. Col. 1.<sup>16</sup>. How could they be the beginnings if He created them ? The 18th verse says " He is the beginning ". So much for the word " beginning ". We need also to consider the expression the " creation of God ". This is not used for the material creation. A helpful parallel is found in the " Israel of God " in Gal. 6.<sup>16</sup> which also is not found in use for the nation. In Rom. 9.<sup>6</sup> Paul says, they " are not all Israel who are of Israel ". And in ver. 8 " the children of the promise are counted for the seed ". In Gal. 4.<sup>28</sup> he says, " Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise ". So then in ch. 6.<sup>16</sup> the " Israel of God " are the *spiritual* Israel. And the " creation of God " is the spiritual creation, the Church of which Christ is the Head, and the source. We are " created *in* Christ Jesus unto good works ". And He being " the Firstborn from the dead ", He is the " beginning " in that sense. And that is the view that is presented in Col. 1.<sup>15-18</sup> ;

the Head of God's new creation. Yet He has to stand at the door and knock, if peradventure someone will open !

## CHAPTER 4.

We now enter upon the main part of the book, in its revelatory aspect. Part of it is figurative, part literal. But we may describe it in general as *visionary*. To anticipate a little, we may look at ch. 5.<sup>5</sup>, "There the Lord is spoken of as a "Lion", and John saw Him as a "Lamb". Now we know that the Lord ascended to heaven in the human body which was raised from the dead. To think of Him as having the actual form of a lion or a lamb would be impossible. It is visionary, and symbolic of truth which is made clear by other Scriptures. But if we attempt to make the whole scene symbolic we are left without an interpretation for it, and the book is not revelation after all, but mystery—secret.

While on the one hand we cannot regard the whole as symbolic, there are symbolic expressions contained which are usually self-explanatory. On the other hand we must recognize the visionary aspect of the whole with certain things contained which will be fulfilled literally as "the supper of the great God" in ch. 19.<sup>17-21</sup>

In ver. 2, John says he was "in the spirit". Our spirits are able to transport themselves to places far distant where we "see" our friends in their homes. Paul says in 1 Cor. 5.<sup>3</sup>, "as absent in body, but present in spirit", relating to the earthly position. Not that the spirit or soul departs from the body for the time; it is just one of the wonderful parts of our constitution. But when John was "in the spirit" it was something unusual. We may conclude that he was unconscious of all around, and wholly under the control of the Holy Spirit Who brought these things before his mental view. It would be wrong to think of John actually seeing God upon the throne in all His glory. For no man can see Him and live. But as has been said, if this did not give to John a real impression of the heavenly scene, but is symbolic of the high places and powers on the earth, as some hold, then we are left without revelation and exposed to the guesswork of men. And all their guesses differ.

Another thing to guard against is, that John being called to "Come up hither" (ver. 1) marks the catching up of the saints and that they are not viewed as being on earth after this, throughout the book. That is pure imagination. What it does mark is that John was now about to have revealed to him the things that had yet to be, in contrast to writing the letters to the churches, of the things that then were.

Chapters 4 and 5, we may say, set the scene for what is to be revealed in the other chapters. It is the scene in which God acts through His beloved Son and the angels, accomplishing various things on the earth relating to men and gathering to himself His own redeemed to be with their Lord in that glorious place.

The throne was in heaven, not on earth (ver. 2). And this helps us

in connection with other places where the throne is mentioned. And (one) literally "he" sat upon it. "He" being described in the next verse. His appearance *resembled* a jasper stone. Obviously this does not describe His personal appearance. But jasper may have some significance, known then if not today. The rainbow round about the throne reminds of the covenant of *grace*. No *conditions* were imposed upon man in the covenant in Gen. 9.<sup>9-17</sup>.

Ver. 4. The word "seat" is the same as "throne", but it is evident that these elders are created beings who owe their authority to God's sovereign appointment. The number twenty-four, though an actual number here, signifies God's government.

It is twice twelve and twelve is three multiplied by four. Three for the Trinity and four for the earth. In 1 Chron. 24 we have twenty-four divisions of priests. And in ch. 25 there are twenty-four twelves of the singers. We have also the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles.

These elders have crowns, which shews their connection with God's government.

That these are actual heavenly beings, and not a figurative expression for the church, is seen in that one of them spoke to John (ch. 5.<sup>5</sup> and 7.<sup>13</sup>). They are also present *with* the Church in 19.<sup>4</sup> and respond to their praise.

The lightnings and thunderings and voices in ver. 5 remind us of Nehemiah's words, "the Great and Terrible God": and prepares our minds for the terrible things that are revealed further on in the book.

The "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" seem to be a figurative view of the Holy Spirit, being "the seven spirits of God". And thus the Father and the Spirit were seen in this first view, but not the Son.

The sea of glass (ver. 6) prepares us for the fuller description in ch. 15.

The word "beasts" here, and wherever these creatures are mentioned later, is literally "living ones". Whereas the elders are said to be "round about the throne", the living ones are said to be "*in the midst of and round about the throne*". This shews that they have a peculiar nearness: and at the same time indicates the magnificence of the throne.

As to their description, we can but compare them with the "cherubim" in Ezek. 1 and 10, and the "seraphim" in Isa. 6.

That God works through angels is clear enough. And that John saw these four in the midst of the throne seems to indicate that there are such creatures occupied in His operations on the earth, and in worship in heaven. In ver. 9 they seem to take the lead in worship, and the four and twenty elders follow.

In ver. 11 we have a further indication that these elders are actual heavenly beings. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying "Thou art worthy, etc.". As unfallen heavenly beings they have received their positions of authority in God's sovereignty. That is to

say, it is solely according to His will and choice, apart from their own merit. We who are redeemed will receive our positions in reigning with Christ according to our faithfulness (Rom. 8.<sup>17</sup>). Paul speaks of the crown of righteousness that awaits those who love their Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4.<sup>8</sup>). The Thessalonians were his hope and joy and crown of rejoicing, because they were the fruit of His labour in the Gospel. But nowhere do we read of redeemed ones casting their crowns before the throne. They are given as a *reward* for faithful service, and therefore will be accepted as such. Moreover, both the living ones and the elders worship God as Creator, and not as Redeemer.

## CHAPTER 5.

As we continue in this chapter, we must remember that John was still seeing a vision of that throne and the One who sat upon it. Also, that the things which he saw at the opening of the seals were future, they were not actually done at that time. And so throughout the book. This makes us the more cautious what we regard as literal and what figurative. So then, we must just pass over these verses as self-explanatory as to what John saw.

In ver. 6 we have the introduction of the Son into this scene. And to appreciate the visionary character of it we have only to think of Him as ever living to make intercession for us, to realize that He is always present in the glory of the Father's House.

The appearance of the Lamb too, is obviously visionary. But the description is significant. Seven horns, express perfection of power. Seven eyes, perfection of knowledge. Thus He is qualified to execute judgment. The seven eyes are said to be "the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth". This suggests that He is the One Who decides how and where the Holy Spirit shall operate. When He was here in His humiliation, He acted under the guidance of His Father through the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11.<sup>1-3</sup> : John 1.<sup>32</sup>). But before He left He promised that *He* would *send* the Holy Spirit (John 16.<sup>7</sup>). All authority is given unto Him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28.<sup>18</sup>), but He is not acting manifestly on earth yet, He waits till His enemies are made His footstool.

In ver. 8, the "odours" ("incenses", marg.) are "the prayers of saints". That heavenly beings have this ministry given to them is shewn in ch. 8.<sup>3</sup>. And that the prayers of the saints are at this time ascending is evidence that they are not yet in glory when this book is opened or when the trumpets are about to sound. To say that these saints are a people who are "called out" after the church is caught up is to introduce a people never mentioned in Scripture.

Ver. 8. Here we find that this song of praise to the Lamb is sung by the living ones as well as the four and twenty elders. If then the elders are a figurative expression for the church, what are the living ones? According to the "A.V." they sing in the first person. They use the word "us" in ver. 9, and "us" and "we" in ver. 10. But David

said, "Thou wilt not leave *my* soul in Hell" when He was speaking of Christ. And in view of what we have already seen concerning these beings that they are actual heavenly beings (one of them speaking to John in ver. 5) David's form of speech would be sufficient explanation for the elders saying "us" in this case.

But the later manuscripts all agree that the correct wording is "redeemed to God" (ver. 9) omitting the word "us"; and "made *them* a kingdom", and "*they* shall reign", in ver. 10. Both the Revised and the New Translation follow this. This shews that the elders are not speaking of themselves.

Ver. 10. Yes, we shall reign *on* the earth. That is quite satisfactory from the Greek in spite of some asserting it is "over" the earth. It is the same as in ver. 13. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5.<sup>5</sup>). No human mind can appreciate the vastness of the number of these angels. Neither can it be expressed definitely in figures even, for "ten thousand" can also mean "myriad", an indefinite number ("muriad", Gr.). Do we anticipate seeing Him in His glory? All these myriads of angels are acclaiming His worthiness. But God alone knows the extent of it. There is a glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17.<sup>5</sup>). But His life and death on earth, as the Lamb, will bring Him added glory (John 17.<sup>24</sup>). Do we not long to see Him?

The opening of the book with the seven seals follows in the next chapter. Therefore we see here not only the angels ascribing glory to Him, but every creature in heaven and earth and sea. But this must be John's anticipatory vision: because the reign of the Beast does not come to an end till the sixth seal is opened.

## CHAPTER 6.

The opening of the first seal is accompanied by a voice of thunder, and that is throughout Scripture indicative of judgment. We therefore do not see in the white horse, the going forth of the Gospel; but of the first of the scourges which God will send at the latter end. Omit the words "and see". The word "come" can also mean "go". And it seems to be the calling forth into existence of a condition of things that will be in strong manifestation in those times, when, and as, each seal is opened. Christ has all judgment committed to Him, and while still in heaven He has control of these things.

What then are we to understand by the "white horse". Ch. 19 clearly shews the Lord Jesus Christ to come on a white horse, but the circumstances of the context shew that ch. 6 is considerably earlier. We need to find a *scourge* somewhere in Scripture which will fit this figure.

The sixth seal corresponds with passages in various books which combine to shew that it takes place after the tribulation caused by the beast, and before the coming of Christ in the day of the Lord. These



are, Joel 2.<sup>30, 31</sup>; Matt. 24.<sup>29, 30</sup>; Mark 13.<sup>24-26</sup>; Luke 21.<sup>25-28</sup>; Acts. 2.<sup>19, 20</sup>.

We also see that the scourges of these seals are not matters of a few hours, or even days. Wars and famines require a number of years; which would bring us back to, at least, the setting up of the abomination of desolation. But if righteousness is typified in a *white* horse, that would hardly be connected with the Beast—in his final manifestation. But the book of Daniel shews that at first the Beast, who is the final King of the North, “comes in peaceably and obtains the kingdom by flatteries”. But when he has become strong enough he will assert himself as God, and demand worship. See Dan. 11.<sup>21, 31</sup>; 2 Thess. 2.<sup>3, 4</sup>. If this be the true interpretation we see that the going forth to conquer is before the 3½ years of tribulation, and that the wars, famines and pestilence that follow in the other seals correspond to the time in Dan. 11 after ver. 21. There are other aspects of this which will come out as we proceed.

The horse is a figure of speed and strength with fearlessness for battle (Job 39.<sup>19-25</sup>). Hence we see in the seals that they represent a state or condition of things that will come upon men. The riders being the powers that cause it; whether human or otherwise.

When the second seal is opened another horse goes forth. This is red: and the consequence is that peace, which is associated with the entrance of the King of the North into the scene is taken from the earth, and men kill one another.

The third seal being opened, a further phase is disclosed: famine, which usually follows war. But there is a peculiar feature about it: “A measure of wheat for a penny”. A “measure” held about 1½ pints (Eng.) and was the daily allowance for a slave. And a penny was the day’s pay for a labourer. So that a man would only earn enough to pay for bread, if it be wheaten bread. Three measures of barley for a penny, solves the position for the labourer by using barley bread, and just enables a continuance of life if he has a family to maintain. But there is no suggestion of rationing here, so the rich can buy as much wheat as they like. And, the following words, “And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine”, adds to the picture to shew that it will be the labourer that will suffer while the rich still have their luxuries. Labour policy and unions will not ward this off, nor will any other policy of men; it is the word of God, and it will be fulfilled. See also Jas. 5.<sup>1-8</sup>.

When the fourth seal is opened a “pale” horse goes forth. And this condition is a combination of what has preceded, with the addition of death by wild beasts.

Only the first four are associated with horses. In the seals, trumpets and vials we see the same construction. The first four differ in some way from the other three: and there is a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh.

The construction of  $4 + 3$  carries a similar suggestion to  $4 \times 3$ .

4 speaking of the earth and 3 the triunity of God ; we thus appreciate God's working in scourges to bring man to repentance. But neither the goodness of God nor His chastisements bring the desired result, stubborn man goes his own way and chooses his own destruction.

The fifth seal is of quite a different character. We have presented the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. Whether their crying " How long, O Lord ", is to be taken literally, or whether it is figurative, like God's word to Cain, " The voice of thy brother's blood cryeth unto me from the ground " (Gen. 4), the principle is the same. The cry for vengeance is not undispensational for those who have ceased from their pilgrimage here. The overcomers in ch. 2.<sup>26, 27</sup> will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Vengeance is a righteous thing, and not to avenge the blood of the saints would be unrighteous. It may be that the long suffering of God toward the ungodly causes them to marvel—" How long ! "

If, however, it be taken literally it would but agree with other Scriptures. Paul was caught up *into* Paradise, but *not into*, but " to " the third heaven, where we may conclude the Lord is fulfilling His intercessory calling as the great High Priest, at the throne of grace.

By the time that this vision is fulfilled it will be only " a little season " and the time of vengeance will come. So then we may say that the fifth seal brings us nearly to the end of the tribulation.

The sixth seal we have already identified with other passages which shew that then the Lord is " at the door " (Mark 13.<sup>29</sup> : and verses 15-17 correspond with Isa. 2.<sup>10-22</sup>, shewing that the terror of men is due to the appearance of the Lord in the air when we are caught up to meet Him. The words " and then " at the beginning of Matt. 24.<sup>30</sup> shew the close connection between the sixth seal and the Lord's appearing for us.

## CHAPTER 7.

Here we have the parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals. It takes us back to a point of time somewhere between the rising of the last King of the North and the commencement of the three and a half years of tribulation. The " servants of God " mentioned are sealed against being hurt when the earth the sea and the trees are smitten. And a likeness can be seen here to the nature of the visitations of God in the trumpets in ch. 8. Thus we see that they are sealed after the first seal and before the first trumpet.

It is perfectly clear that the hundred and forty-four thousand are literally the tribes of Israel. And there is no reason why the number of them should not be literal as well. In Zech. 13.<sup>8, 9</sup> we see that a third part of Israel are spared and brought through the fire to be blessed on earth when the Lord comes to reign. And as the context is dealing with the mighty changes in the land at that time, it seems safe to say that this third part are the same company as those sealed in Rev. 7.

Isa. 66.<sup>19, 20</sup> shews the gathering back of the others of the redeemed remnant from all the other lands, which would amount to far more than the hundred and forty-four thousand. We therefore conclude that the trumpets are limited to the vicinity of the land of Israel and the sealed are from those in the land at that time. If we want to know the experiences of that company of Israel and their deliverance we shall find them in the Psalms and the Prophets spoken of as the "remnant", "those whom I reserve", "an afflicted people", "outcasts", etc.

From Dan. 11 it is clear that all through this period the Land of Israel is in the throes of war between the King of the North and the southern countries. That he has also broken his covenant with Israel taken away their sacrifices, placed his image—the abomination of desolation—in the temple, and is seeking to exterminate the nation completely (Psa. 83.<sup>1-4</sup>). It is noticeable however, that Revelation says nothing about this remnant of Israel except the bare fact that they are sealed at that time, a clear evidence that this book does not apply to a Jewish remnant.

This sealing will also preserve them from the vials of wrath which come later. And a parallel passage with this is Ezek. 9 where a company of faithful ones are sealed by a mark at the time of the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar.

The next view is that of the saints of the present age in the presence of their Lord in heaven. The throne is the same as in chapters 4 and 5, and the great multitude of all nations (Jews and Gentiles) are seen clothed with white robes—justification; and with palms—of victory—in their hands; and about the throne are the angels, the elders and the living ones. Then one of the elders invokes John's enquiry as to who this multitude is, and gives the answer, "These are they which have come out of *the great tribulation*, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb". Until recently I had regarded this statement to refer to the tribulation of Matt. 24.<sup>21</sup>. But a brother questioned me and suggested that as the expression "the tribulation the great", as it is in this case, does not occur anywhere else, can it not be regarded as referring to that tribulation which has been the normal experience of all the faithful from Abel onwards, and not to the 3½ years at the end of the age. I hesitated, not wishing to *give* the words a meaning to suit my view of the prophetic outline in general. However, as I considered it, I realised that I do not depend on this verse for the founding of my belief and I therefore need not fear any suggestions that might be made as to an ulterior motive.

In support of the belief that the Church will be caught up before the 3½ years tribulation it has been urged that only a very small portion of the Church will be living when that tribulation comes, and therefore it would be unfitting for these words to be used of the Church as a whole; and they therefore must refer to that company of disciples of Christ which is "called out" after the Church is caught up. I had

appreciated the difficulty from my own point of view for a long time, but for the reason stated I hesitated to accept the suggested thought.

The fact is that Scripture says nothing about such a company being called out after we are caught up : it is purely an imagination. Moreover, there are several clear and decisive statements that those of the present dispensation who are alive when the Lord comes *will* pass through that  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of the reign of the Beast. Also, there is not one statement to be found which says, or implies, that the Lord will come before that time of tribulation. I have therefore accepted the suggestion that " the tribulation the great " *does* refer to the normal experience of all the faithful from Abel till the coming of the Lord.

There is a distinction made throughout Scripture between the robe and the garments. Isa. 61.<sup>10</sup> is a helpful passage as a basis. The robe is always singular, the garments are always plural. Ver. 3, the garment of praise, being one of the garments of salvation. The robe is never bought by ourselves, the garments may be (Rev. 3.<sup>18</sup>). The robe of *righteousness* stands for *imputed* righteousness. The garments stand for the various *manifestations* of our salvation in manner of life. These garments need to be bought anew, or washed in the water of the *word*. But the robe is only washed *once*, that is, in the *blood* of the Lamb. We can at once see that atonement is implied in the blood and therefore justification. That being solely the work of Christ, nothing we can do will alter it (Rom. 4.<sup>8</sup>). Isa. 1.<sup>18</sup> says, " Though your *sins* be as scarlet *they* shall be white as snow ". This shews that by the blood of Christ the sins are changed into righteousness, judicially. Thus " *they* have washed *their* robes and made them white " is the initial cleansing by which one is justified before God. That can never be repeated.

That *they* have washed their robes is an unusual way of expressing our cleansing by the blood of Christ. It cannot be explained as indicating another company of redeemed ones, for justification is the same for every individual all down the ages. But there is a time in our experience when we enter into a covenant with God and apprehend that cleansing which the blood of our Saviour affords. So it is put for the heavenly people in Psalms 50.<sup>5</sup>. See also Rev. 22.<sup>17</sup>, " let him take ". It is the human side of that grace which is sovereign in its working.

" Therefore " (verses 15-17). The words hardly need comment, except perhaps that *living* fountains suggests they will never run dry. And the Lamb will be the Shepherd Who will feed and lead His people. What will it be to be there ! To behold His glory and to join in that cry with a loud voice " Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb ".

Chapter divisions are not inspired. And though they are useful in locating passages, they must not be allowed to affect the sequence of thought. The first verse of ch. 8 should obviously be the last of ch. 7. It completes the view of the seven seals and what a completion.

Immediately after the description of the presentation of the saints before the throne, all heaven is silent for the space of half an hour. The "Holy, Holy, Holy" of ch. 4.<sup>8</sup> ceases while all the angelic throng stands amazed at the marvels of God's grace, bringing poor defiled worthless sinners to such a position of glory—washed in the blood of the Lamb !

Before passing on to the trumpets, shall we then glance back over the ground we have covered. The seals begin to be opened soon after the last King of the North comes to the throne and extend over the time which includes the sealing of the hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel, the tribulation of Matt. 24 : and the period of the signs in heaven, coming to their conclusion in the presentation of the Church before the throne of God.

## CHAPTER 8.

The thought that the seven trumpets follow the seven seals may be partly due to the chapter division : but in any case, it throws out of sequence the whole of the record of events. We have seen that at ch. 7.<sup>1</sup> we had to go back to just after ch. 6.<sup>1</sup> and cover the same time again from another view. So it is here, and so it is all through the book, we have to keep going back to an earlier time and working forward again.

The seventh trumpet leads up to the same blessed event as the sixth seal ; i.e. the Church in glory (ch. 11.<sup>15-18</sup>), but from another viewpoint, both in the trumpet judgments and in the glorifying of the saints. Therefore the trumpets must occur during the same period as the seals, but commencing somewhat later. The hundred and forty-four thousand being sealed between the first seal and the first trumpet.

But before the trumpets begin to sound there is a premonitory demonstration of God's power in response to the prayers of the saints. The burning of the incense is a sweet savour or fragrance of Christ.\* This indicates His interest and intercession on their behalf. But before they begin to sound the angel takes fire from the incense altar into the censer he has just been using, thus shewing the connection between the prayers and what is now about to happen. The fire is then cast into the earth and there are voices, thunders, lightnings, and an earthquake. But it brings no response of repentance from men, and the first trumpet quickly follows. Hail and fire remind of the plagues in Egypt. And the fact that war is not mentioned seems to suggest that in some way blood is formed as it was in Egypt, so affecting the drinking water.

At the second trumpet (ver. 8) there is, *as it were*, a great mountain burning with fire, cast into the sea. This would be the Mediterranean Sea ; not that all the oceans are affected. This results in a third part of the sea becoming blood also. We notice throughout these four

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\* For fuller details of this see "Types in Exodus" from the author.

trumpets that it is a third part only that is smitten. But there is no mention of a third part in the vials of wrath.

At the third trumpet (ver. 10) "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". To accomplish this it seems necessary for the star to break up in its descent so that particles fall over a wide area, affecting all the rivers and fountains of that part of the earth which constituted the then known world.

There is a point to be kept in mind as to both seals, trumpets and vials, which is, that there is no definite statement that all these plagues, once they have started, continue together till all are fulfilled. It may be that one may be lifted before the other commences. Or, one may overlap the other.

At the fourth trumpet (ver. 12) the sun, moon and stars are affected in a remarkable way, so that darkness prevails over a third part of the day. We do not know at what part of the day, it may vary over a period of days. So with the night, if it be a full moon the darkness will prevail for a third of the night. The day and night of course still remaining twenty-four hours in length.

There is no need to attempt to interpret these things as if they were symbolic language. Luke 21.<sup>11</sup> speaks of fearful sights and great signs from heaven, and in none of such passages is there any suggestion that these things are symbolic. Nor should we give any heed to the reports that are made of "signs in heaven" in our present time. When the signs spoken of in Scripture do come, the people will not take it so complacently. And while looking at Luke 21 it may be well to point out that ver. 25 is later in the sequence of events than Rev. 8, it corresponds with Matt. 24.<sup>29</sup> and Rev. 6.<sup>12-14</sup>; and is followed *immediately* by the coming of the Lord. Whereas there are three more trumpets to sound after Rev. 8 before the Lord comes. About that time there are things to happen which will be similar to one another, but happen at different times, some not happening till the day of the Lord has commenced, that is after we are caught up. We therefore need to be careful in reading to note the true sequence if we wish to have a clear view of the whole period involved.

We notice at ver. 13 a break between the first four and the last three trumpets, with a difference in the character of the events, as we saw in the seals. But in the trumpets we notice there is a definite pause at the fourth, sufficient for the angel to go forth with the warning of the three "woes" that are soon to follow. Do we not see here a further evidence of God's mercy in calling the inhabitants of the earth to repentance?

## CHAPTER 9.

In considering this chapter we must not be seduced into anything of a symbolic view of the awful creatures depicted or of the place they come from. It is true that "stars" are symbolic of men in ch. 1.<sup>20</sup>,

but there the symbolism is explained. Here the star cannot be a man, and there is no other explanation given. Nor is there any explanation of these extraordinary creatures from the symbolic standpoint. We therefore understand that both are literal. And human imagination must be kept out. The key is given to the angel, to loose the locusts, just as the sixth angel does in ver. 14.

So too with regard to the "bottomless pit". It is another name for "Sheol" or "Hades" which are translated "Hell". It is the place of the souls of the departed, and of demons, where they are confined in torment (Luke 16.<sup>23</sup>).

The word "bottomless" here is the same word as the "deep" in Luke 8.<sup>31</sup> and Rom. 10.<sup>7</sup> which are sufficient to make the matter clear in view of Luke 16.<sup>19-31</sup>.

But it should be noted here that, whereas before the resurrection of Christ just and unjust were in Hades, since the resurrection the just are in Paradise with Christ, and the bottomless pit, or Hades, contains the unjust and demons only.

These beings are called locusts, but they have forms which are far more terrible. Locusts feed on the green leaves and grass and do much damage; but these are not allowed to hurt either. Later, a similar army will be released which is described in Joel 2, but that will be *in the day of the Lord*. They are also not allowed to hurt anyone who has the seal of God in his forehead. Thus the children of God and the elect of Israel will be preserved from their terror (see 2 Cor. 1.<sup>22</sup> and Rev. 7.<sup>3</sup>).

They have power to torment men five months, which indicates that the trumpets, like the seals, are extended over a period of time (verses 5, 10).

There is a king over them (ver. 11) whose name both in Hebrew and Greek means "destroyer". But note, he and his army are not allowed to put any out of existence, they are only allowed to torment. Beware of those who teach that this word destroy means "to put out of existence—to annihilate".

That is the first of the three "woes". The second, the sixth trumpet, ver. 13, follows, and is similar. But we notice that the four angels are bound in the river Euphrates, and that seems to imply that the "horses" are bound there too. These are more terrible than the locusts and have power to kill. Again a *third part* of men are killed, but the two thirds that are spared do not repent!

## CHAPTER 10.

Again, as in the seals, there is a break between the sixth and seventh and another matter is introduced. Into this gap we have inserted, (a) the seven thunders; (b) the foretelling of the close of the "mystery"; (c) the personal message to John; (d) the two witnesses their death and ascension to heaven: bringing us to ch. 11.<sup>14</sup>, which implies a

pause between the sixth and seventh trumpets. But that does not mean that all these things are to be *fulfilled* in that gap. This we shall see as we proceed.

The first four verses are concerned with a mighty angel and the seven thunders that sounded when he uttered his mighty cry. But ~~what~~ those thunders indicate or when they will sound we are not told. It may be that it will be in this gap. And does that not imply that there *may be* other things to happen which are not told us ?

Then the same angel swears by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that when the seventh trumpet begins to sound there shall be time no longer. This does not mean that time will cease to be counted, it will continue "for ever and ever" (ch. 20.<sup>10</sup>). The meaning is that God has by all His afflictions up to that time been calling men to repentance, but they do not repent. But when the seventh trumpet sounds, the "mystery" will finish and the Lord will come to set up His Kingdom on the earth ; for which purpose the Beast and all his hosts and all who receive his mark will be destroyed from off the earth and cast into a furnace of fire there to await the last resurrection at the end of the thousand years of His reign here.

The finishing of the mystery at this time—the beginning of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, exactly agrees with 1 Cor. 15.<sup>52</sup>, "the last trump". This is absolutely decisive that the church will not be raised and caught up till the tribulation of Matt. 24 is over ; see verses 29-31. The weight of m/s evidence favours the omission of the words "and of the Father, and of Christ" in Col. 2.<sup>2</sup>, thus leaving it exactly as in Rev. 10.<sup>7</sup>.

Verse 8 introduces the personal message to John. In this section we have an important principle that applies to all who in any capacity are faithful to God's word. There is no suggestion in Scripture that the gift of prophecy will be restored again in this age. It is prophesied in Joel 2.<sup>28</sup> for the Millennium, but not before. The two witnesses in ch. 11, and the coming of Elijah before the Day of the Lord are the only intimations of such inspired ministry that we have in Scripture relating to the end of this age. Those who profess to be prophets, or to have the gift of prophecy refute their claims by the very things they utter.

However, John's experience here is valuable to us. Seeing the angel with the book, he says "give me the little book". Without suggesting for a moment that there was anything wrong in John's wish for the book, it is nevertheless true that one can have a very *natural* interest in anything to do with prophecy. Since the revival of the blessed hope of our Lord's return there have been many false views of it prophesied, all conflicting with one another ; and many prophecies which have all died a natural death as the time has passed.

John was told to take the book and eat it up. Here is good counsel for all time. Eat it up. If children of God spent time reading and



re-reading the word of God and meditating on what they have read and thus digesting it, instead of reading fanciful interpretations of it, there would be far more enlightenment, stability and unity among those who look for our Lord's coming. A man may be a teacher, but that is no guarantee that what he teaches is the truth. We all need one another and the least is not to be despised. But in the end the word of God must interpret itself.

When John ate the book, it was sweet as honey *in his mouth*. But when he began to digest it, it made his belly bitter. He was warned of this, but nevertheless, he ate it up. So likewise, if we want to understand prophecy let us prepare ourselves for some bitter experiences. Ezekiel had a similar experience to John (Ezek. 2.<sup>8</sup>-3.<sup>3</sup>). He read the lamentations and mourning and woe before he ate it; but that did not rob him of the sweetness. If we have a taste cultivated to the pleasant aspects of the word of God, stealing promises from other dispensations that do not belong to us, we shall find no sweetness in the "sure word of prophecy" which God has given us as a light for these last days. But if our taste has been cultivated to delight in the whole counsel of God, delighting as much in the reproach of Christ as in the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, every bitter thing will be sweet. Many are persuaded by wishful thinking that the Church will be caught up before the tribulation period. They don't want to go through the tribulation, and so are glad to accept a theory that encourages that belief.

When John had eaten the book he was told that he must prophesy again before peoples and nations and tongues and kings. This may suggest that he was a prisoner at the time, and the prospect of release to serve the Lord again in open testimony would be very pleasant, from one standpoint. But we remember what Stephen said just before he was stoned to death, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted". And the Lord Himself after reproving the Pharisees on similar lines said, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers". Did any of the prophets or apostles have a comfortable time? But Paul testified that "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ".

But as to John, let us turn to Mark 10.<sup>35-40</sup>. Before the Lord answered their request He asked them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They answered that they were able. And the Lord said that indeed they would. This seems to be a clear indication that James and John would suffer and die for their testimony. James' death is recorded in Acts 12.

The prophetic word of God does not forebode good to the world but evil. As the days of Noah and of Lot. And we must not expect that anyone who holds such a testimony is likely to be popular. Let us make up our minds that suffering is ahead, and exhort one another daily to take up each his cross and follow our Lord.

Verses 1 and 2 are the only places where this book refers to Israel's place of earthly worship. The measuring of the temple implies that God has it in view and that the restoration of it is nigh. The temple here is obviously the house, because it is contrasted with the court, which John was not to measure. To understand the significance we must acquaint ourselves with some Old Testament passages on the temple.

In the house stood the altar of incense, and incense typifies prayer. The altar of sacrifice stood in the court. From what is said above, we see that the sacrificial altar is rejected—not measured—but the altar of incense—prayer—is accepted. In 1 Kings 8, in Solomons prayer, we find the words repeated, "If they pray *toward this house*". If they stood in the court, or if they were in other lands as captives, it was always toward the house.

At the time of Rev. 11 the daily sacrifices will be taken away by the Man of Sin, "because of transgression". When Israel rebuild their temple in unbelief their iniquities will make their sacrifices abominable to God, and He will allow the Man of Sin to break the seven years covenant with them, remove the sacrifices and place the abomination of desolation in the Holy Place. Thus the court is given to the Gentiles to tread under foot for forty-two months (the last  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of the "week" of Dan. 9.<sup>27</sup>). See also Dan. 11.<sup>31</sup>; Isa. 66.<sup>1-5</sup>.

But though corrupt Israel and their sacrifices are rejected, there will be a remnant, who though not converted to Christ, are conscientious, upright people, who pray to God from far and near, *toward that house*, and their prayers will be heard and they will be brought safely through the tribulation and the vials of wrath which follow it, and be delivered when the Lord comes to earth to reign.

There is one little difficulty here that needs to be cleared. In Matt. 24.<sup>15</sup> the Lord speaks of the "abomination of desolation . . . *standing in the holy place*". The holy place is where the incense altar stands—in the house. Then the house also is defiled as well as the court. How then can God have respect unto it? Further, in Isa. 66.<sup>4</sup> not only are the offerings on the altar in the court rejected, but "he that maketh a memorial with incense is as if he blessed an idol". This clearly shews that the house is defiled and their incense is rejected even before the Man of Sin stops the sacrifices.

The solution lies in discerning between the actual and literal sacrifices and incense of those who engage in these things, and the spiritual counterpart of them in that remnant who may be far off from the temple in other lands. Psalm 141.<sup>2</sup> says, "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense: and the lifting up of my hands AS the evening sacrifice". The whole of this Psalm may well be applied to that remnant already mentioned, for they will be "cast out" by their brethren. And Psal. 51.<sup>17</sup> says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise".

That remnant will not at that time be able to offer the spiritual sacrifices that we do (Heb. 13.<sup>16</sup> ; 1 Pet. 2.<sup>5</sup>), for they will not receive "the Spirit of grace and of supplications" till "the Day of the Lord", which commences after the tribulation period is over (Zech 12.<sup>10</sup>). But God says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psa. 50.<sup>15</sup>) another Psalm directly associated, yea, prophetic of that time.

When Solomon made his prayer to God (1 Kings 8) he asked, "when they shall pray toward this place, then hear thou *in heaven* Thy dwelling place, and when Thou hearest, forgive". So will it be in that time (Rev. 11.<sup>1, 2</sup>), God will reject the incense offered by the hypocritical nation, but He will hear the prayers of the humble and contrite when they pray toward His house.

Ver. 3 : the two witnesses. Their names are not told us and we do well not to speculate. There is no reason to think they are men who have lived on the earth before. "It is appointed unto men once to die" it is true ; but we must not conclude that everyone *must* die, some will be caught up still living, but changed, when the Lord comes. So it is not necessary to conclude that Enoch and Elijah *must* come back to earth to die.

But the length of their testimony we are told. It is 1260 days. Israel's year was twelve months of thirty days each, making 360 days. The odd five days of the year stood over till in six years there were thirty days in hand, when another month was added to the year making thirteen months and so corrected their years with the solar years.

$3\frac{1}{2}$  times 360 = 1260. And  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times 12 = 42. So  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, 42 months, and 1260 days are all equal. This passage introduces this period which is the last half of the week already referred to in Dan. 9.<sup>27</sup>. In that period the Beast, the Man of Sin, will be exercising his power against everything that names the name of God and therefore, Israel will have to become confederate with him or be liable to death : and the remnant who remain faithful will be the object of his hatred as will also the Church. That is the period of tribulation of which the Lord spoke in Matt. 24.

The remarkable thing is that in Rev. 11 nothing is said about the temple or Israel after verses 1 and 2. It is just the same in ch. 7. After the sealing of the tribes no more is said. In the Prophets and in the Lord's ministry, though both are almost entirely concerned with Israel, we find glimpses of grace to Gentiles. And in the Revelation which concerns the Gentile nations and the appearing of the Church in glory, glimpses of grace to Israel shine through. It is the same principle as the Epistle to the Romans, where Paul says (ch. 11.<sup>25</sup>), "I would not have you to be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened unto Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in". The walls of Jerusalem are graven upon the palms of God's hands, they are ever before Him.

In ver. 4 these witnesses are called the two olive trees and the two lampstands. In Zech. 4 the two olive branches are the two prophets who supported the worship by the oil of the Spirit in the *one* lampstand—the community of Israel. Here the two olive trees *are* the two lampstands. So the two lampstands are the individual prophets: just as in ch. 1 the seven lampstands are the seven churches. A lampstand in each town.

Ver. 5. That these two witnesses have power to protect themselves by fire does not necessitate that they do not belong to this church period. Even Paul exercised a power of judgment upon one who resisted his testimony, in Acts 13.<sup>11</sup> Elymas was smitten with blindness. And God can appoint special conditions for special circumstances. By the time they testify the saints will have fled from Judea, according to Matt. 24.<sup>16</sup>, when the abomination of desolation is set up. But God will *not* leave Jerusalem without witness, He sends these two prophets, whom they cannot put to death, to maintain the testimony throughout the 3½ years of the Beast's reign of terror.

Because they have power to shut heaven that it rain not, does not prove one of them to be Elijah, nor because they have power to bring plagues does it prove one to be Moses. Let us be content not to know who they are.

At the end of their testimony they forfeit their lives just as others of the present dispensation have done. Their power to protect themselves was for the special purpose of their testimony, and when that is finished they will be killed. Not one of the "remnant of Israel" will suffer death at that time, they are all sealed and preserved for the Millennium.

In ver. 2 we see that Jerusalem is called the "holy (separated) city". Though spiritually it is called Sodom and Egypt (ver. 8), God will never give it up, it is set apart for Himself.

In ver. 7 we have the first mention of "the Beast". And we are told here that he ascends out of the bottomless pit. We need to remember this when we read more about him later. He makes war against the two witnesses when they shall have finished their testimony—that is at the end of the three and a half years.

Their dead bodies will lie in the streets unburied for the peoples to rejoice over, but after three and a half days they are raised up and called up to heaven. Thus we see there is a space of time after the 3½ years before the seventh trumpet sounds, and this brief period is very important in the sequence of events at that time.

Ver. 13 tells us of a great earthquake that kills seven thousand people in the city. Thus God not only vindicates the testimony of his two witnesses, He brings a catastrophe upon the people, which in a moment of fear causes them to glorify Him. Yet there is no repentance unto salvation. It is similar to ch. 6.<sup>14-17</sup>.

Before we go further it may be as well to say a little more about these notable 3½ years. In ch. 12.<sup>14</sup> we have "a time, and times, and half a

time". This, from the context is obviously the same period as in ver. 6—1260 days. The number of days and the number of months are so clear in other passages in Revelation that we may wonder why this obscure expression should come in in ver. 14. May it not be that God by using it here makes clear the like statement in Dan. 7.<sup>25</sup> ? By this means no doubt is left as to the two passages being identical as to time, and the other terms—days and months—in Revelation combine to shew that the half week in Dan. 9.<sup>27</sup> is the same period also.

Another point in connection with this is, Which of these expressions is to be taken literally and which not ? And, by what means can we decide ?

Dan. 9.<sup>24</sup> speaks of seventy weeks, and certain things are said to happen in that period. Verses 25, 26 shew that after seven weeks and sixty-two weeks Messiah would be cut off. That cannot possibly be literal weeks of days. The only thing that fits at all is weeks of years ; that is  $70 \times 7 = 490$  years.

Messiah being cut off at the end of the sixty-ninth week leaves no other place for that last week, for far from the holy place being anointed after the death of Christ, the veil was rent at His death and in less than forty years after the whole was destroyed. Moreover, the other details which are mentioned in ver. 24 are determined upon Daniel's people—Israel. And they certainly have not been fulfilled yet. That last week is still future : and that fits all the prophetic times given. And still further, Dan. 10.<sup>2</sup> speaks of "weeks of *days*" (marg.), thus making a contrast with those in ch. 9.

Now this "day for a year" principle has been carried too far by various people who have attempted to interpret the various periods mentioned. It is true that there are certain passages elsewhere where it expressly *states* a day for a year : as in Ezek. 4.<sup>6</sup>. If it is *stated* in the passage "a day for a year", then we accept it. And if, as in Dan. 9, the sense of the passage requires it, we accept it. But to apply the rule where there is no evidence given, is not sound, and it has led to all sorts of confusion, including the fixing of dates for the Lord's return. The periods in Dan. 8.<sup>14</sup> ; 12.<sup>11, 12</sup> have been treated like this and many fanciful interpretations have been built up which conflict with other passages. These three passages should all be taken as literal days.

The Book of Daniel cannot be understood without the Book of the Revelation. The same rule applies throughout, the New Testament explains the Old. One can see the wisdom of God in leaving the period obscure in Dan. 9.<sup>24-27</sup>, it was not for Israel to know until they had fulfilled the words by cutting off their Messiah. Neither did they know then, because their eyes were blinded.

Let us now consider a little the period between the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years and the sounding of the seventh trumpet. From Matt. 24.<sup>29-31</sup> it is clear that the Lord does not come immediately after the tribulation. There will

be signs in the sun and moon and the stars will fall from heaven. We noted this at the sixth seal in ch. 6. And *then* the sign of the Son of Man will be seen in heaven. But Rev. 11 tells us of the death and rising again of the two witnesses, which will also take place in this period. Then in ver. 13 there is a great earthquake before the seventh angel sounds.

As we proceed we see that the first resurrection takes place at the seventh trump (see ch. 10.<sup>7</sup>). That is in ver. 15. The 1260 days (the tribulation period) ends before the two witnesses are killed, and they lie in the street for 3½ days. But the last trumpet does not sound just then, for there is a great earthquake that follows the ascension of the two witnesses, then follows the warning that the second woe is past and the third woe cometh quickly. How long this pause will be we do not know: there is therefore sufficient indefiniteness to make it still impossible, even when the two witnesses are taken up, to know the day or the hour when the Son of Man cometh (Matt. 25.<sup>13</sup>). But Luke 21, speaking of the signs in the heavens, tells us when these things begin to come to pass, then our redemption draweth nigh (25-33).

The trees shooting forth in this passage is *not* a figure of Israel and the Gentile nations. It is plainly stated that as the shooting forth of the trees indicates the approach of Summer, so "these things", the signs in the heavens (ver. 25), indicate that the coming of Christ to set up His Kingdom is nigh at hand. But we still shall not know the day or hour.

Ver. 15, the seventh trumpet. It is at this point that the Church is caught up; when the angel *begins* to sound (10.<sup>7</sup>). The saints rejoice that the Lord has taken His rightful place over the Kingdoms of this world. The elders take up the worship and record the coming of God's wrath, and the reward of the saints, both dead and living.

Ver. 19 is a brief expression of what is recorded in ch. 16, the vials of wrath which conclude with an earthquake and great hail. But that is after the saints are seen on the sea of glass in ch. 15.

The word "destroy" the earth is rightly present tense and shews that those people are still living when the Lord comes to "destroy" them. It is not a *resurrection* of the ungodly, but only of God's servants. The fact that men cannot put the *earth* out of existence, shews that we have no right to say that the *people who are destroyed* are put out of existence. It is the same word.

If we revert to the seals we see that at the sixth seal the Church is caught up, and the Day of the Lord follows immediately upon the ungodly. Then we have the view of the saints in glory and silence in heaven for half an hour (ch. 7 and 8.<sup>1</sup>). It seems, therefore, that the voices in 11.<sup>15</sup> are immediately after the silence of 8.<sup>1</sup>.

We need to keep in mind the connection between the end of this chapter and the view in ch. 15 followed by ch. 16, because the sequence of events is broken here for the insertion of chaps. 12, 13 and 14.

Now let us refresh our minds on the construction of the seven seals and the seven trumpets. Both consist of a four and three. Four speaks of earth—the four points of the compass ; three speaks of the triune God ; God's dealing with the earth in warning judgments. We see also in both that there is a gap between the sixth and seventh ; not of time in the happening of those things, but simply in the construction of the book, to introduce some related events. We also note that up to this point we have not progressed beyond the catching up of the saints ; but we have gone back over the same period a second time.

## CHAPTER 12.

This takes us back over the same period for the third time, but each of the three presents a different view of the same period. Chapter 13, going back again over that period, presents yet another view.

The importance of this chapter to us of the present time can hardly be overestimated. It contains a most blessed stimulus to *work* with a view to the coming of our Lord.

The statement that the Lord will come as soon as the last member of the body is called out is misleading, to say the least. In view of the comparison of the last days with those of Noah and Lot we might rather conclude that there will be a period in which none are saved. We cannot assert this to be so, but we *can* assert that the Lord will come when His wife hath made herself ready (ch. 19.<sup>7</sup>). We would not say a word to hinder the gospel testimony, but we would urge upon all God's children the importance of being a united body—as one—in the truth. And this chapter is a precious encouragement to it.

To say that the woman in ver. 1 is a figure of Israel is most unfitting. Israel as a nation never have a heavenly position. Only those in the Church of the present time have that. Jews and Gentiles seated with Christ in heavenly places.

We should, however, recognize that Jerusalem which is above comprises all the redeemed from Abel to Christ's first coming, as well as those of the present dispensation. Heb. 12.<sup>22-24</sup> shews this identification, and 11.<sup>13-16</sup> shews that the Old Testament saints had a heavenly prospect and will share in the first resurrection with us in verses 35-40. These must be distinguished from the nation of Israel—as a nation—which is purely an earthly position. When the New Heavens and the New Earth are created the heavenly Jerusalem, having become "the Lamb's wife" at the first resurrection, will come down upon the New Earth (Rev. 21).

The moon has a relation to Israel, for their months began with the new moon, and that day was to be observed. The moon also belongs to the earth. The woman is above that clothed with the sun. This may suggest having put on Christ. The twelve stars express the twelve apostles, stars always being figurative of individuals—not of tribes. That this is a parallel with Gal. 4.<sup>26</sup> seems beyond question.

We next have to decide who the child is (ver. 2). Ver. 5 tells us that as soon as he was born he was caught up to the throne of God. This cannot refer to Christ, for He was not caught up at the time of His birth. The statement that he is to rule all nations with a rod of iron is simply explained from ch. 2.<sup>26, 27</sup>. This is Christ's promise to those who "overcome". And this is the characteristic of the man child.

The Church has a dual position, in heavenly places in Heb. 10.<sup>19-22</sup>, and outside the camp in Heb. 13.<sup>10-14</sup>. Both the woman and her seed are seen to be in both places in this chapter. Moreover, they are both seen as singular and plural. As one in the heavenly places, as plural—a company—on the earth.

We should also notice that the same period is mentioned here in verses 6 and 14—the 3½ years of tribulation caused by the Beast. And with these preliminaries as a background we can proceed to the details.

The travail in ver. 2 has a counterpart it is true in Isa. 66.<sup>6-10</sup>; but that cannot prove that the chapter before us refers to Israel, for the reasons stated. But it does help us to see that as there will be a travail and birth in Israel just before the Lord comes for their deliverance, so there will be in the Church on earth at the beginning of that 3½ years of tribulation. And as the birth in Israel is a *company* (Isa. 66.<sup>8</sup>), so it is a *company* in Rev. 12. Moreover in Isa 66 it will not be a physical birth but a spiritual one, so will it be in the Church in Rev. 12. Gal. 4.<sup>19</sup>, Paul's travail in birth *again* over the Galatians, is just a parallel with the woman in heavenly places.

Is it not time we all awoke to the grievously sad state of the Church as a whole? Let us not look at just our own circle of fellowship. Every saved one is a member of Christ. Therefore to be content because we are happy in our own arrangements and to be unconcerned about others is sinning against Christ the Head of the body. One may be quite satisfied that his position is scriptural, but if others cannot conscientiously have fellowship with that position it is sin to ignore such. Yet by far the majority of Christians are settled down in this state, taking the attitude of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" And if another dares to mention any of the things that forbid him having fellowship with them it is resented as the height of presumption. This sad state of affairs is greatly dishonouring to the name of our Lord and it is time we all examined ourselves as to what we are doing about the matter.

When we consider the figure of travail we realise that there is a period leading up to the final stage. Let us not reason in our hearts that if this travail is to take place at the beginning of the tribulation period, or just before it, then there is no need to be concerned, it will come in its time.

Can we say the *beginning* of travail is not yet here? (Matt. 24.<sup>8</sup>). Surely it has begun. Then it is time that we all began to agonize in prayer to God for this united overcoming experience to be brought



forth. And not only to pray but to act. To deal with the causes of this disunity, to check up on ourselves, to criticise our own beliefs and practices in the light of Scripture to see whether our position is as strong as we think, to consider the other brother's position, that if he be wrong we may be able to help him. Let *love* not aloofness characterise us.

Whatever your belief about the tribulation, the Lord will not come till His wife hath made *herself* ready.

Ver. 3 tells of another wonder, or sign, in heaven ; and verses 7 to 9 make clear who that is. We may be sure that when God's people get to prayer and action the Devil will begin to get savage. And he will do his utmost to destroy that "man child". The word "child" here means "a male". So we have a double emphasis on manliness—strength (1 Cor. 16.<sup>13</sup> ; Eph. 6.<sup>10</sup>). Incidentally, women can *rightly* take part in this manliness. It has been exemplified in the women martyrs as well as the men.

This great red dragon is plainly said to be Satan, and we must preserve the distinction between him and the beast in ch. 13.<sup>1</sup> : there are similitudes, but there are differences also.

If we view Satan as an evil spirit, he is *one*. But if as the head of a kingdom manifest upon earth, by which he will seek to destroy the man child, then we can appreciate the seven heads and ten horns. But we will go further into this when we consider the Beast in ch. 13.

In ver. 4 we see the dragon standing "before the woman". Then he is also in heavenly places (Eph. 6.<sup>12</sup>, marg.). And if the woman and child are figures we have reason to regard the stars as figures, as they are in a number of cases (ch. 1.<sup>20</sup>). In Dan. 8.<sup>10</sup> which describes the Beast, through whom Satan works, we have a similar view, and we know that Satan's hatred is not against the literal stars but against God's people. Stars are usually figures of prominent ones. In Dan. 11.<sup>35</sup> we read of them of understanding, who will "fall" by the hand of this final king. And in 12.<sup>3</sup> they are seen in Resurrection as stars. Remembering that we have a heavenly place and an earthly one as well, we can see how the stars will be cast down to the earth, i.e. lose their appreciation of the heavenly calling (see Matt. 24.<sup>12</sup>) while others will forfeit their lives or suffer in other ways. "He shall *wear out* the saints" (Dan. 7.<sup>25</sup>).

When the child is brought forth, immediately the woman flees into the wilderness (ver. 6). This is the moment when the abomination of desolation is set up (Matt. 24.<sup>15</sup>), when the tribulation will start.

Prayer, worship, travail of soul and all spiritual exercises are in heavenly places, but the persecution is on earth. The woman is seen in either place according to the nature of the case.

The fleeing into the wilderness will be very literal in Judea, right on the spot where the Beast is at work (Matt. 24.<sup>16</sup>). But wherever the power of the Beast is felt the saints will be outcasts, not able to buy or

sell. But God has a place prepared. He is not at a loss, there will be those who though not saved will befriend his children (Matt. 25.<sup>34-40</sup>).

The child being caught up to God is again a view of that strength which will suddenly be granted that lifts up God's children above all the threats of the Devil. The same people are seen on the earth later, they have two spheres at the same time, like the woman. The Devil being thus defeated, He is enraged. But there is war in heaven (verses 7-9) and he is cast out and his angels are cast out with him. In view of Eph. 6.<sup>12</sup> we see from this that there will cease to be, at that time, the wrestling which hinders our spiritual experiences now. But on the earth, the Devil, cast down, will manifest his wrath against the saints in persecution, unto death if he can accomplish it. But God sets a limit and He will bring many through to be alive unto the coming of the Lord. Michael *the* Archangel certainly stands for the people of Israel in Dan. 12.<sup>1</sup>. But in 1 Thess. 4.<sup>16</sup> his voice is associated with the up-call of the Church (Archangel = Chief Angel, there is only one); therefore there is no ground here for saying that this chapter refers to a Jewish remnant.

Ver. 10 may present a little difficulty. It might seem at first to be more fitting to the end than the beginning of the tribulation period. But if we remember the strength of the overcomers and the heavens cleared of Satan's hosts we can appreciate "now is come salvation". That is, salvation from the powers of evil (Phil. 2.<sup>12</sup>).

The kingdom of our God is twofold. We are already in the kingdom (Col. 1.<sup>13</sup>), but we still look forward to it (2 Thess. 1.<sup>5</sup>), that is, the earthly manifestation of it when Christ returns. But in Matt. 13 we have various illustrations of the way in which the kingdom has been corrupted. The tares, the leaven, the birds in the mustard tree, the bad fish. The Devil has far more power, and has made far more havoc, today than he will do in the tribulation, with all his persecution. But before the end of the age comes there will be a great clearance of the kingdom, the usurpers will be cast out into a furnace of fire and the Lord will come into His rightful position among His people. No more explaining away the force and meaning of His words to avoid reproach; His authority will be acknowledged, and his people will be willing to die rather than yield.

"The power of His Christ" will then be realised, as Paul desired it in Phil. 3, "the power of His resurrection"; because His people will be willing for the cost—counting all else as refuse.

Satan knows it is of no use to accuse us *falsely* before God. But he has not had to look far for a real ground of accusation during the centuries since the unity of the faith was lost. Truly we can overcome all his accusations by the blood of the Lamb, but better if he had not been given the ground for accusing. Then they will overcome by the word of their testimony also. To forfeit one's life rather than yield is victory, it defeats the Devil. To yield is to give him the victory.

In ver. 12 the contrast between the dwellers in heaven and the dwellers in the earth, *may* be a contrast between those who are "not of this world" and those who "are of the world". But we notice in the first case "the heavens *and* those that dwell in them", which may suggest the angels rejoicing, as in Luke 15.<sup>7</sup> and 1 Pet. 1.<sup>12</sup>.

The "woe" to the inhabitants of the earth . . . for the Devil is come down unto you, reveals his character. He will vent his spite even upon his own. But his hatred is particularly against the woman and her seed. These are characterised by keeping the commandments of God. A feature sadly lacking in Christendom today. The commandments of God have been made to give way to the traditions of men.

The "flood" in verse 15 may be figurative of a great army; the "flood" in Dan. 9.<sup>26</sup> is obviously the Roman army which destroyed Jerusalem. See also Jeremiah 46.<sup>7-8</sup>; Psa. 93.<sup>3</sup>; Isa. 59.<sup>19</sup>; Dan. 11.<sup>22</sup>. But the earth will swallow them up as it did Korah and his company. Dan. 11.<sup>22</sup> refers to the final King of that same time, the ruler of the fourth *beast* empire of Dan. 7. But viewing the flood literally presents the difficulty of the Devil being able to produce it.

### CHAPTER 13.

Here we are introduced to this "Beast", to whom reference has already been made. And it is necessary that we should refer to the book of Daniel to be clear as to who or what this Beast is. Imaginative ideas, born of overbalanced occupation with Ecclesiastical Rome, have led to interpretations which will not stand the test of the Divine revelation. And the same applies to "the Man of Sin" of 2 Thess. 2. This cannot apply to the Pope, for he does not profess to be God. Neither is the cathedral at Rome the temple of God. The only place for the temple of God is at Jerusalem. The book of Daniel is self-explanatory—so far as it goes—if we read carefully the whole of it. But the complete revelation can only be seen by using Daniel and Revelation together. Neither is complete without the other.

Dan. 2 presents Nebuchadnezzar's dream of an image composed of four metals. Daniel interpreted these as representing four kingdoms; but he does not give the names of them. Two points are however important. One is, that Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar "*Thou art this head of gold*" (ver. 38). But the next kingdom did not follow at his death; for Jer. 27.<sup>6, 7</sup> tells us that the kingdom was given to him and his son and his son's son. This grandson is Belshazzar, of Dan. 5. From this we see that the head of gold represents a kingdom with a *succession* of kings, and that whoever is reigning at any particular time can be described as the head of gold. A king and a kingdom can only exist together, hence Pharaoh is often mentioned in a way that obviously means the whole nation of Egypt. This will be seen to be of help when we consider the "Beast" of Revelation.

The other point is that Dan. 2.<sup>35</sup> tells us that all these four metals will be broken *together*. They therefore continue in some form until

the fourth kingdom is destroyed. This is further developed in that in Revelation 13 the Beast is described as having some characteristic of each of the three that precede him.

For this comparison we must go to Dan. 7. In ch. 2 we have an image representing the glory of man from his own standpoint. In ch. 7 we have the same four kingdoms portrayed from God's standpoint; wild beasts. The first three beasts are likened to a lion, a bear, and a leopard. The fourth is not likened to any animal in particular, but is described in detail that agrees with the various references to it in Revelation. But the point for the moment is that the Beast in Rev. 13 is said to be like unto a *leopard*, feet like a *bear*, and mouth like a *lion*. So that he is a combination of all the other three. This not only applies to his character, but further pursuit of the study reveals that he will embrace all the other three kingdoms in his own. And it is further revealed that all these kingdoms have ruled over the Holy Land.

We have seen that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. He was king of Babylon. Ch. 7 does not name the succeeding ones but ch. 8 reveals the two following. The "ram" of ver. 3 is shewn to be the combined kingdom of the Medes and Persians; and the "he goat" is shown to be the kingdom of Greece (verses 20, 21).

The fourth beast is not named anywhere in Scripture. But this is determined by the fact that four beasts *only* and four metals *only* bring us to the time of the end when the Son of Man shall take the kingdom. The Power that succeeded Greece was Rome, and Rome was ruling over the Holy Land when the Lord was here; and was still ruling when the last of the Scriptures was written. Since then other powers have dominated that land, but that has been during the Church period and they do not count in God's prophetic programme. The severance of the 70th week from the others at the death of Christ, in ch. 9 helps us to see that this "gap" in the programme is in the mind of God. There are only *four* kingdoms from Babylon to the end, therefore Rome must be the fourth, and must be revived.

It has been wrongly assumed that the church cannot be on earth while the 70th week of Daniel is being fulfilled. But we must remember that "the times of the Gentiles" began with Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore the sixty-nine weeks were fulfilled during the times of the Gentiles and that Rome was in power when the Lord was here, and He prophesied that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21.<sup>24</sup>). We are also told in Rev. 11.<sup>2</sup> that the Gentiles will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months, which is the last half of that 70th week.

We also know that Israel were not completely rejected till about forty years after the death of Christ, a period of probation being granted to give space to repent. And putting these things together we see that there is an overlapping of God's dealing with Israel while the Church was being formed at the beginning, and therefore there is no reason

why He should not work the two parts of His plan together at the end. That the Church will pass through that tribulation period we have seen is proved from Rev. 10.<sup>7</sup> and 11.<sup>15-18</sup>.

We have now established from Scripture that Rome is the fourth and last Gentile power, but we see the wisdom of God in not naming it while Rome had power over Israel and while the Church was being established in the countries of her dominion. We can quite expect that the prophecies of her downfall would excite hatred and persecution against both peoples. The Roman rulers were well acquainted with Jewish affairs (Acts 24.<sup>10, 11</sup>; 26.<sup>2, 3, 27</sup>) but Dan. 12.<sup>10</sup> says "none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand".

Now we need to compare Daniel and Revelation as to further details of this Beast. There are some fine points to be considered, but God will reward patient study. Let us first compare the Beast with the Dragon. The latter we have seen to be the Devil: he is not human but a spirit, a fallen angel. The Beast we have seen to be the last head of the Roman empire. He is a man: and so is the second Beast of which we read later, the False Prophet. Here we have a trio working in fellowship, a horrible travesty of the triunity of God.

Comparing ch. 13.<sup>1</sup> with Dan. 7 we see that there is no mention of the seven heads in Daniel as there is in the Revelation. One wonders whether the seven heads are only found in the later stage.

Now comparing 13.<sup>1</sup> with 12.<sup>3</sup> we see that the Devil has the crowns on his heads, while the Beast has them on his horns. If I may express an opinion here, I think it shews the Devil's superiority. The ten horns are ten kings who are in a subordinate position. The seven heads seem to be (from ch. 17.<sup>10, 18</sup>) seven kingdoms embraced in the empire. The Devil himself rules over these, giving his power into the hands of his human representative (13.<sup>2</sup>).

Blasphemy characterizes the whole combination, both of the beast and the woman: the latter being ecclesiastical Rome. The Roman Emperors seem to have done more in the past by way of persecuting and desecrating both the temple and the Jews and the Church of Christ than any other rulers.

We must keep in mind all through that the "Beast" can mean the Empire, or the individual ruler, and that the "heads" *include* the individual rulers, just as the "little horn" in Dan. 7.<sup>8</sup> *arises among* but finally becomes the supreme ruler. The context in each case must be considered. In ch. 13.<sup>3</sup> it seems that the "head" that is wounded to death, is either the chief ruler or that part of the Empire over which he personally rules, seeing that this wonderful recovery causes wonder to the *beast personally*.

The word "wounded" as the margin shews is actually "slain"; the primary meaning being "to slay by cutting the throat". This seems to require that it is the personal ruler himself that is actually wounded in this way, but whether he dies or is healed of the stroke that would have resulted in death is difficult to say. That the most won-

derful things will be done at that time is shewn by other passages (Matt. 24.<sup>24</sup>; 2 Thess. 2.<sup>9-11</sup>; Rev. 13.<sup>15</sup>). Thus all the world wondered after the Beast.

Ver. 4, "And they worshipped the Dragon". It is this that the Devil has been seeking all through. He promised all the kingdoms of the world to Christ if He would fall down and worship him. And Dan. 11.<sup>38</sup> also speaks of this, for this last King of the North is the personal Beast. 2 Thess. 2.<sup>4</sup> does not say that the Man of Sin proclaims that there is no God, but that *he* is God. Communistic Atheism is not the dread power of the end time, and Russia is not the "King of the North" of Dan. 11. These are but intermediary forces which will be overruled to bring about those things which are prophesied.

Verses 5, 6. God has permitted men to blaspheme His name and to defy Him to do His worst many a time, and have died without any manifestation of God's vindication of Himself. And this man's blasphemies will be allowed to go on, and God will "keep silence", and the people will be carried away with it, but he will come to his end when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire.

Verse 7. His power to make war with the saints does not imply that the saints take up arms to fight. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Dan. 7.<sup>25</sup> says he will "wear out the saints of the most high", and those who will not worship him will be liable to be put to death.

Ver. 9 is important. We need an ear to hear. How often did the Lord say this in His ministry! It implies an intimacy with Him. It cannot be acquired by a course at college. Nor by reading what this man says, or that man says. It can only be acquired by the method prescribed by God Himself—Deut. 17.<sup>14-20</sup>; Josh 1.<sup>8</sup>; Psalm 1.<sup>1, 2</sup>; Psalm 119, the whole of it; John 14.<sup>23, 24, 26</sup>; and don't forget the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles in Col. 3.<sup>16</sup> and 1 Tim. 6.<sup>3</sup>. Don't let any man persuade you that the words of Christ belong to some other dispensation.

These lines are not being written to take the place of the Scriptures, but to encourage the reading—consistent, continuous reading—of them. You will not gain anything like a full knowledge even of the outline of prophecy by reading this book. It is written that years of meditation and searching, which has resulted in *unlearning* a lot, may save others from wasted time in helping them to acquire quickly and soundly that knowledge which will be of such value in the times immediately before us till our Lord doth come. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him".

Ver. 10. "He that leadeth into captivity must go into captivity" does not mean that when the Lord comes these captors will become earthly slaves to others. There will be nothing of that when the Lord reigns. Neither are we to conclude that every one that slays another by a sword will himself perish by a sword literally. The sword is a symbolic expression for war. And when the Lord comes, every one

who has fought on the side of the Beast will be slain by the sword which proceeds out of His mouth. See Isa. 11.<sup>4</sup>; Zech. 12.<sup>4</sup>; 14.<sup>12, 13</sup>; 2 Thess. 2.<sup>8</sup>; Rev. 19.<sup>15</sup>.

And the "captivity" mentioned is something far worse than earthly slavery. We see that though the Beast (Man of Sin) is *destroyed* by the brightness of the coming of Christ, he is taken alive at that time and cast into a lake of fire, where he still is a thousand years later (Rev. 19.<sup>20</sup>; 20.<sup>10</sup>). This passage is a very strong deterrent to saints taking up arms, or assisting in warfare. Their *patience* is to be their characteristic. "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21.<sup>19</sup>).

Ver. 11. The first Beast arose out of the sea. The context being symbolic we look for the interpretation, and we find it in ch. 17.<sup>15</sup>—the peoples of many nations. This second Beast arises out of the earth. There must be a reason for the contrast. The word "earth" can also be "land" and therefore may refer to the Holy Land. At that time there will not only be those who make a covenant with the Beast for seven years, but when he breaks it there will be some, of Israel, who act treacherously (Dan. 11.<sup>30, 32</sup>). It seems quite possible therefore that this one may be an Israelite. And the two horns may suggest a parody to the Lamb of God. Zech. 11,<sup>15-17</sup> may be an allusion to this. By the miracles which he does he deceives the people and secures worship to the Beast and through him worship to the Dragon.

But we need not fear the dictates of the Beast, all will not bow to him. While one is not able to buy or sell without his mark, God has a way, and we can take comfort from ch. 12. With God, the wilderness will become a sanctuary.

There have been various attempts made to fit the 666 (ver. 18) to men who have arisen on the earth in the past. But there is much to be fulfilled before this "mark" appears.

It is true that the letters of the alphabet in Greek are also numerals, and we may expect that that is how it will be worked out. But there has been a lot of this kind of thing, which is but an attempt to make a shew of wisdom without knowing the elementary parts of prophetic truth. We may expect more too as the time goes on. We have no need to work up something exciting to arouse interest in the Lord's coming. If His word abides in us we shall find our time all too short to do what we want to before He comes. There is much rubbish to be cleared away before His wife will have made herself ready.

National registration, rationing, trade union restrictions, all have a suggestion of the things to come, and these can have a helpful effect in preparation if we learn from the Scriptures where to draw the line as to what we can and cannot do conscientiously before God: and so help to cultivate a standpoint among God's children that will fortify their minds for the time to come. We have very little to lose now for conscience sake compared with those who are to follow us.

Is it not refreshing to turn from the "Beast" in the last chapter to the Lamb in this one. In the 1st verse we see Him on Mount Zion with the hundred and forty-four thousand, having their Father's name written in their foreheads. That this Mount Zion is the heavenly one of Heb. 12.<sup>22</sup> seems clear from ver. 3, by the throne, the living ones, and the elders. It must therefore be a view of the saints of the present age. But the question arises, Is the number literal or figurative? and, Is the name in the foreheads literal or figurative?

That numbers in Scripture have a significance is true, but that does not make them figurative of some other number. It would be difficult to find in Scripture a number that is not literal. And if this is thought to be figurative, then of what is it figurative. We should remember that the inspired title of this book is "The Book of the REVELATION of Jesus Christ". And if we find symbolisms in it that are not interpreted, it is for a reason, as has been suggested concerning the Beast. And all such become clear in the light of history as we near the end time.

It is beyond our conception altogether, to comprehend the Lord's glorious reign on earth, and all the glorified throng reigning with Him. But if we can imagine something of the glory and majesty, it will help us to appreciate this hundred and forty-four thousand following Him "whithersoever He goeth".

Ch. 11 brought us to the seventh trumpet and the resurrection of the saints. Ch. 15 takes up the sequence from there and shews us the saints on the sea of glass. The chapters in between reveal various details which need to be filled in before going further.

So this chapter opens with the view of this hundred and forty-four thousand who are appointed to a special privilege in resurrection because of special worthiness. And in ver. 2 we have a great voice (or sound) from heaven as the sound of many waters. The waters, we have seen, represent multitudes of peoples. Harps are only mentioned in two places beside this one (ch. 5.<sup>8</sup>; 15.<sup>2</sup>). In 5.<sup>8</sup> they are possessed by the living ones and the elders, who are closely associated with the Church when she is in heaven. And in 15.<sup>2</sup> the harps are possessed by the resurrected saints. This seems to complete the view. The Lamb, the living ones, the elders, the resurrected saints; and out of them this special train who follow the Lamb, whose first named distinction is that they sing a song which no one else can learn. A special choir for those who are set apart to attend upon the Lamb personally. "Oh the joy to see Him reigning!"

Their first point of worthiness is that they were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. This seems to be the only figurative expression in the passage: and it cannot be literal because the word "virgin" is never applied to men *except* figuratively (2 Cor. 11.<sup>2</sup>). This is not interpreted for us in this passage, but when we come to ch. 17 the meaning seems to be clear enough. That horrible woman has "daughters", who are of the same character. Here is a view of



state and church alliance from God's standpoint. Comment is hardly needed here, we shall consider ch. 17 in due course.

The other point of worthiness is that no guile was found in their mouths. What a testimony. And that hardly needs comment either.

Their being the *first fruits* unto God does not imply a select resurrection before the remainder of the Church. The others are there, mentioned in ver. 2. And James speaks of us all as being "kind of firstfruits" (Jas. 1.<sup>18</sup>). But these are brought into prominence before all the rest.

We have yet to deal with the Father's name written in their foreheads. If we examine all the passages we may get some help. Ch. 7.<sup>3</sup> is while they are on the earth. The sealing is for their protection from *spirit* beings, therefore we would expect it to be unseen to mortal eyes (ch. 9.<sup>4</sup>). 13.<sup>16</sup> is the mark of the Beast which must be literal and those zealous for the cause would probably prefer to have the mark there. 14.<sup>9</sup> and 20.<sup>4</sup> are also the mark of the Beast. 17.<sup>5</sup> is the "woman" which is a symbol all through. 22.<sup>4</sup> is the resurrection state parallel to this, referring to all who serve God. And there is nothing here to suggest that it is figurative. It seems therefore that we must accept it as literal. It is only fair to the case, however, to say that a literal understanding of the words gives a rather strange impression, and we therefore look for some ground for regarding them as figurative. If we take the word "seal", we find it has two meanings. If an envelope is stuck down we say it is *sealed*, and in a number of places this is the plain meaning in scripture. But sometimes a seal in wax is used bearing an impression which identifies it with some person. This is obviously the meaning in Rev. 7.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>; 9.<sup>4</sup>. This meaning is also seen in Eph. 1.<sup>13</sup> and 4.<sup>30</sup>. Here it is that which distinguishes the children of God from the children of the Devil—the work of the Holy Spirit manifest in their lives (see 1 John 3.<sup>10</sup>). Then comes to mind the words of our Lord, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". This again is a matter of characteristic shewn in the life. And it seems to be left a matter for each one to decide, whether such an interpretation can be applied to a "name *written* in the forehead or not, or whether we must leave it an open question. This is not a matter of doctrine, we know that identification is the real point of the statement, and that is the precious truth we can rejoice in. The word "written" also seems to imply God's personal doing on each individual, even as the emphasis naturally falls on the word "God" in 2 Cor. 1.<sup>21</sup>. Contrast the *mark* of the Beast, applied by anyone, in Rev. 13.<sup>16</sup>. How precious is our personal intimacy with the living God.

Verses 6, 7, the everlasting gospel. The seals and trumpets have brought us through the tribulation period from two aspects, each concluding with the first view of the resurrection of the saints and their presence in heaven (ch. 7.<sup>9-17</sup>; 10.<sup>7</sup>; 11.<sup>15-18</sup>; 14.<sup>1-5</sup>). Ch. 12 has given us another view of that period, God's preservation of His own; and ch. 13 another view revealing the reign of terror of the Beast during that same period.

Although the earlier verses indicate that the 144,000 are part of the Church in resurrection, that does not necessitate that what follows must be subsequent to the resurrection; for v.v. 9, 10 clearly relate to the time of the Beast's reign.

The proclamation of the everlasting gospel "to every nation and kindred and tongue and people" by one angel would require a considerable amount of time, for even an angel can only be in one place at once.

Here then is seen God's last call to the people to "fear God," in contrast to fearing the Beast. Public preaching will be impossible once his mark has been issued. So God, in wonderful longsuffering, by sending an angel to preach to all nations, shews that He is still superior; and that there is still time to repent before the seventh trumpet sounds, and the door is shut. But alas, throughout that period, and the time of the vials, the repeated words are, "they repented not."

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Incidentally, we see nothing here of the angel sounding a trumpet, as is so often depicted. He preaches, with a loud voice.

A word here concerning Luke 18.<sup>7, 8</sup>, may be helpful because that passage has been sadly misconstrued to imply that the faith of the present age will be wholly lacking, or almost so, when the Lord comes for His Church. But ch. 12 has told us just the opposite. In Luke 18 it is not the Lord's coming for the Church, but His coming to the earth taking *vengeance*. Therefore, seeing that the Church is taken up at the last trump, and that the vials of wrath are poured out after that and before the Lord descends to earth, that period of the vials is one in which there will not be *the faith* on the earth, though the remnant of Israel will have faith in God, but not converted to Christ.

Ver. 8, the second angel. This one announces that Babylon is fallen. The fall of Babylon is described in ch. 18. In ch. 16.<sup>19</sup> we see that she comes into remembrance before God; so that at the seventh vial (16.<sup>17</sup>) the fall is about to take place. From those facts we conclude that this angel will fly through the heavens just as the fall takes place. Therefore at this point we are carried forward in the sequence of events to the seventh vial.

This great city will be the seat of the Beast. Babylon (literal) on the river Euphrates has yet to be rebuilt to fulfil prophecy. All the world will worship him (whose names are not in the book of life) and that is the spiritual fornication which brings down the wrath of God, of which all the nations will partake.

Verses 9-11. The third angel announces the terrible doom of all who receive the mark of the beast. That their torment is literal and endures eternally is the only conclusion possible from these words. Many are perverting them and denying the endless torment which God here asserts. But it cannot be done by honest handling of the word of God. Note that in ver. 11 day and night continue for ever and ever, as we shall see later.

But here is the patience of the saints. Through the preceding 3½ years they have suffered persecution, they have kept the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, the despised and rejected One. But now He is about to appear in glory to take His rightful place and reign. This twelfth verse takes us back over the reign of the Beast again.

The word "henceforth" may mean from the time that John wrote. It cannot mean from the fall of Babylon (ver. 8) for the saints in Christ will have been caught up at the seventh trumpet which is *before* the vials are poured out. There are several of these parentheses found from here on, which break the sequence of the events by an exhortation or a brief encouragement.

Verses 14-16 take us back to the catching up of the saints to meet the Lord in the air. The figure follows the normal features of the harvest, the ingathering of that for which the labour has been spent. Matt. 13.<sup>38</sup> tells us that the good seed are the children of the kingdom. At the "consummation of the age" the tares will be gathered out first. This will be brought about partly by the overruling of the Beast's edict that everyone is to receive his mark. Of course, those who are indwelt by the Spirit of God will refuse. Then at the sounding of the Last Trump the Lord will come with His holy angels and gather together His elect (Matt. 24.<sup>29-31</sup>).

This one sitting on the cloud can be none other than the Lord Himself. But that an angel should cry to Him, to thrust in His sharp sickle, seems out of place. But if we note that this angel comes out of the temple in heaven—the Holiest of all where God the Father is—we see that he is but the messenger. We need to remember too that, not only throughout His reign on earth, but for ever He will be subject to the Father. This is consistent with His position as *Son*, and also with the fact that He is, and always will be, "The Man-Christ Jesus". And that God has committed all judgment unto the Son, because He is the Son of Man (See also Psalm 110.<sup>1</sup>).

Verses 17-20 shew a reaping of a different kind. The vintage exactly fits this too. Now we note a difference that is important. The parable in Matt. 13 finishes at the point "gather the wheat into My barn". There it can be stored indefinitely. Nothing is said about grinding. So in Rev. 14.<sup>16</sup> nothing is said beyond the reaping. Grinding is not part of the harvest; but the treading of the grapes is part of the vintage: and that is mentioned here. From this we see the distinction between the two classes portrayed. This gathering is done by an angel (ver. 17) and the word to reap is given by another angel who comes from the altar and has power over fire. This speaks of judgment (ch. 8.<sup>5</sup>).

We should also remember that the altar here is the altar of incense which symbolises prayer. The brazen altar has no counterpart in heaven. The sacrifice was offered on earth. But Christ having offered Himself, ascended to heaven and became our High Priest to make intercession. Nevertheless, the incense altar is associated with judg-

ment, and many places in the Psalms consist of prayers for vengeance for the blood of the saints, and that is an outstanding feature of the judgments in the Revelation.

When the grapes are gathered they are cast into the winepress of the wrath of God. But ver. 20 does not tell us who does the treading. However, if we turn to Isa 63.<sup>1-6</sup> we have no doubt that it is not the angel but the Lord Jesus. His enemies will be gathered together in readiness for Him to come to execute the judgment.

This calls into view a number of other passages. Isa. 34.<sup>1-10</sup> mentions Bozrah and Idumea as the starting point of the Lord's glorious march of victory, which will extend to Mount Megiddo near Carmel. He will pass up through Judea to Jerusalem (Zech. 12), and the great slaughter of Zech. 14 ; Joel 3 and Ezek. 39, and many other passages, including Rev. 19, will extend for the whole of this thousand and six hundred furlongs. Ver. 20 says the winepress will be trodden "without the city". At that time the Beast will be about to cut off Israel entirely and will have his forces assembled at Jerusalem. But God will suddenly make him run away from her (Jer. 50.<sup>44</sup>) and the slaughter will take place outside the city and extend over the mountains of the centre of the land.

The blood "even unto the horse bridles" may probably mean *splashed* unto the bridles.

This treading of the winepress carries us forward a little further in the filling in of details, even up to ch. 19.

## CHAPTER 15.

This brings us back again to take up the thread of events from ch. 11, the resurrection of the saints at the last trump. In 16.<sup>1</sup> we see the seven angels ready with the seven *last* plagues, but before they are poured out we have the wonderful view of the saints on the sea of glass, which is before the throne of God (ch. 4.<sup>0</sup>).

This sea of glass is also mingled with fire. The glass speaks of purity, transparency. The fire speaks of wrath and reminds us of the lake of fire. Glass is like water, but it is solid so that no one can sink into it. Those who are washed in the blood of Christ are unhurt by the fire, the spotless Son of God has borne that wrath in our stead. Therefore on a basis of pure righteousness we shall stand before God, before His throne without fear, praising and worshipping Him to the sweet music of the harps.

These worshippers also sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. This song of Moses, is not the song which Israel sang in the day when they came through the Red Sea (Ex. 15). It is the song which Moses taught the people just before he died (Deut. 31.<sup>30-32</sup>.<sup>43</sup>). In Rev. 15.<sup>4</sup> the theme is that all the nations shall come and worship before God. And the theme in Deut. 32 is God's judgments upon the nations, the deliverance of His remnant of Israel,

and the end is, "rejoice ye Gentiles with His people". The theme is the same in each case. And the next thing to happen after the saints are caught up is the pouring out of the vials of wrath and then the Lord's descent for the deliverance of Israel. But there is another song, the song of the Lamb. The very name "the Lamb" is a reminder of Passover and of Isa. 53. But in the book of Revelation it is also associated with wrath and judgment. See Rev. 5.<sup>9</sup>; 6.<sup>1, 16</sup>; 14.<sup>10</sup>; 17.<sup>14</sup>. From this we can see that the saints in resurrection glory take the same standpoint as God and the Lamb concerning judgment, they worship Him because they know that His ways are righteous.

We might note one point in ver. 1 before proceeding, it is the word "last". Seeing that these plagues are so described, they cannot happen at the same time as the seals and trumpets. We see the saints in glory at the end of both these, but they are on the sea of glass *before* the vials of wrath are poured out.

Moreover, though Israel is not mentioned here, we know that a remnant is to be saved from being slain through all this period of trouble to inherit the earthly blessings spoken by the Prophets. So although the vials of the wrath of God are poured out they will not be hurt by them. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, wrath cannot touch them.

Ver. 5. The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony. The testimony was the two stones with the law on them which Moses put in the ark. The ark was placed in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. The word "temple", above, is the word for this Holy of Holies.

The exposure of these stones meant death. Or even to enter the Holy of Holies meant the same, except for the high Priest on the day of atonement (Ex. 28.<sup>35</sup>; Lev. 16.<sup>2</sup>; 1 Sam. 6.<sup>19</sup>). No one can be confronted with the law of God without being condemned. So the ark of the testimony speaks of judgment. The mercy seat which was on top of the ark, is where the blood was sprinkled, and it was there that God spoke in covenant with His people through Moses. We therefore see the significance of the words in Rev. 11.<sup>19</sup>, "there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament." It is the same occasion as 15.<sup>5</sup> and the vials of wrath follow.

Ver. 6 expresses again the righteousness of God's wrath by the angels being attired in pure and white linen.

The four living ones of ver. 7 remind of those in Ezek. 1. In both passages they are associated with God's judgment on the earth.

The smoke in ver. 8 is another symbol of judgment. And no one was able to enter into the temple till these vials were poured out. Thus John saw in vision the counterpart of the tabernacle and the temple on earth. The rent vail gives us access to the throne of grace even now (Heb. 10.<sup>19-22</sup>) and the word "till the seven plagues of the angels were fulfilled" implies the same privilege in resurrection glory as being normal. This may also coincide with the silence of ch. 8.<sup>1</sup>.

Vials are shallow bowls which can be emptied out very quickly. We therefore find no periods of time connected with these as we do in the seals, i.e. famine and wars ; and in the trumpets—five months. Everything here is done as it were in a stroke and in quick succession. This helps us to see that the period between the catching up of the Church—*after* the darkening of the heavenly bodies (Matt. 24.<sup>29</sup>)—is only separated from the return to earth with the Lord by a very short while, so that the two events are regarded as but parts of the one appearing or coming.

Otherwise how can we explain the fact that 2 Thess. 1.<sup>7-10</sup> promises rest to the saints when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance ?

So then the saints having been caught up at the seventh trump, these vials are intended to prepare the way for the Lord to deliver the remnant of Israel. But there is also an opportunity for men to repent implied in ver. 11, in that it is said, “ they repented not ”.

We notice too in the first vial the affliction is upon those who have the mark of the Beast. The elect remnant of Israel therefore are not touched. It is very much like the experience in Egypt (Ex. 9.<sup>6</sup> ; 10.<sup>23</sup> ; 11.<sup>7</sup>). The nature too of the plagues is very much like those in Egypt, in some cases. So, in the second vial the sea is turned to blood. In the third the rivers are turned to blood. In the fourth the sun is so affected that men are scorched, yet in the fifth the kingdom of the Beast is full of darkness, and they gnaw their tongues for pain.

We saw that the seals and trumpets were each divided into a four and a three ; in the vials it is the same. The first four are general in their application : the last three are directed against Babylon, the seat of the Beast. We also see that the seventh is separated from the others in the prophecy—not in the happening—and a parenthesis is inserted (verses 13-16).

The fifth is darkness upon the seat of the Beast ; the sixth is the drying up of Euphrates ; the seventh is the fall of Babylon, which is on the bank of Euphrates.

Old Testament prophecy requires that Babylon must be rebuilt, just as much as that the temple must be rebuilt. More will be said upon this when we come to ch. 17. But this is sufficient for the purpose of this chapter.

At the sixth vial the river Euphrates is dried up to prepare the way of the kings of the east. Some have interpreted this as the withdrawal of the Turkish dominion from this part. But since that took place no “ kings of the east ” have appeared to fulfil the words of ver. 12. Turkey no more comes into this prophecy than the Seleucians, and the Phœnicians who dominated Palestine. This dispensation ignores these things, and at the end we shall find Rome is in power and Babylon is the seat of government under the Beast.

The coming of the kings of the east is prophesied in Jer. 51 ; verses 11 and 28 in particular mention the kings of the Medes : Media being east of Babylon with Euphrates in between. Dan. 11.<sup>44</sup> refers to this, the king of Babylon—the Beast—being in Palestine when this news reaches him.

Now we come to the parenthesis, which has another parenthesis within it, thus (13, 14 (15) 16). The gathering together of these kings cannot be between the sixth and seventh vials, because the gathering together of such armies would take quite a considerable time. They are gathered there, at least in part, before the abomination of desolation is set up, for the conduct of the war with Egypt (Dan. 11.<sup>25</sup>) ; greater forces being added between that time and the end. The going forth of the three unclean spirits may even be in succession, as these forces increase. It is evident also that ver. 16 couples on to ver. 14 and ver. 15 stands alone. It is another of those interjections of exhortation, like the one in ch. 14.<sup>13</sup>. From the time that John wrote the exhortation holds good even to the end. The watching does not imply that the Lord may come at any moment. The passages in the Gospels speaking of the tribulation and other things to happen before the Lord comes all contain this exhortation. In the passage before us the watching is connected with *keeping the garments*. The enemy will do his utmost to rob us of the garments of salvation. He cannot take the robe of righteousness, but if he can rob us of the garment of praise and set us grumbling, that is one manifestation of the flesh—which is the meaning of the *nakedness* here. See Isa. 61.<sup>3, 10</sup> ; Rev. 3.<sup>17, 18</sup>.

The seventh vial occupies more space than any of the others, verses 17-21. The words "it is done", are really "it has become". The great moment when the final stroke falls on Babylon and the Lord descends on Idumea is now come.

Then follows the description of God's awful judgment upon that city. The hail mentioned in ver. 21 taking our minds back to Job 38.<sup>22, 23</sup>.

In point of time we have now arrived at the place from which we broke off in ch. 11.<sup>19</sup> and 14.<sup>20</sup>. Geographically, these two are in Palestine, where the Lord treads the winepress (Isa. 63) ; whereas ch. 16 is in Babylon which is destroyed from heaven.

## CHAPTER 17.

This chapter is symbolic all through ; and the explanation is given only in part. The description of the beast in ver. 3 at once identifies him with the beast in ch. 13, which we have seen to be the last head of the revived Roman Empire. We have also seen the wisdom of God in not divulging the name of the fourth beast in the book of Daniel.

But who is the "woman" that rides upon the beast ? Sitting is suggestive of reigning. A woman governs the horse she rides on. Who will then govern this last great ruler ?

In ch. 12 we saw a woman in heavenly places, the "Jerusalem which is above" of Gal. 4.<sup>26</sup>, the system of truth and purity, betrothed to Christ.

But what more striking contrast to this can be given than the woman portrayed in this chapter? See 2 Cor. 11.<sup>2</sup> and James 4.<sup>1</sup>. And with whom is this woman associated in her sin? Not the poor, not the middle class, but with those that reign—the kings of the earth. She is seen in the "wilderness" of the unsaved. That barren waste that produces nothing for God, from which the redeemed are called out (Acts 15.<sup>14</sup>). The word "church" means "called out", see John 17.<sup>14-16</sup>). The Beast that she rides is full of names of blasphemy.

From what has been said above, the nature of her "fornication" is made clear, to the extent that it is figurative. The Old Testament abounds in this figure of speech in condemning Israel for their prostitution of their affections to idol worship, instead of to the true God who redeemed the nation out of Egypt and espoused it to Himself.

Man is a God-conscious being essentially. He must worship something; but always prefers the worship of a counterfeit because that allows him to continue in his sin. Heathendom has never produced any of the virtues that belong to the faith and worship of the true God. The coming of the Gospel of Christ has put this to shame; and man has now turned either to Atheism or to a counterfeit having an outward semblance of worship, self-abasement and other virtues, but which like the Phariseism of the days of Christ is full of extortion and excess, hypocrisy and oppression, whose leaders are "ravening wolves", "wolves in sheep's clothing". This class set themselves out to satisfy the masses in their inward craving for religion with earthly power and riches; just like the heathen religions. They all provide a system of "priesthood" to stand between the people and God. To perform at all the state ceremonies and "bless" all the doings of the state. They pray for the people, alive and dead, because such, not having the *witness of the Spirit* that they are children of God, depend upon a ceremony performed by a "priest" on their behalf. They claim that God is their Father but they know not the privilege of His true children. All this the priests do at a price. And herein lies the "harlotry". The system as a whole hires itself out to the kings of the earth to satisfy its craving for outward religion and thereby obtains tremendous wealth (ver. 4). At the same time she drains a revenue from the poor by keeping them in ignorance.

She has a counterpart for the cardinal points of the Christian faith. The virgin birth, corrupted so that Mary becomes an intercessor; regeneration, made to depend upon a corruption of baptism. The Lord's Supper, perverted into a morning arrangement where the symbols are claimed to be changed into the actual body and blood of Christ, thus emphasizing the power of the *priest*. Resurrection is taught, but not as the Scriptures teach it; purgatory is introduced to bring in more revenue by prayers for the dead. And woe to any who



dare to oppose it. Thank God the blood of the martyrs has procured liberty in this and many lands, so that today we are able to say plainly that this woman is none other than ecclesiastical Rome. Alas the nations are forgetting the price paid for their liberty and are turning back again to that abomination.

But the woman is not alone she is the "mother of harlots", which are born of harlotry. The alliance of "church" and state is the essential of this harlotry. It is that that constitutes every "Protestant Church" in every land a daughter of the "great whore". They have all sprung from that system, they have *protested* against some of its errors, but they all continue the unholy alliance and many are the corruptions that have been perpetuated to this day.

The woman's name (ver. 5) is "Mystery". None but the inner circle of Romanism knows the depth of the subtlety of her wickedness, so wonderfully is it disguised. "Babylon the Great" is the part of her name which we have yet to consider.

The question at once comes, How can this woman be Rome when her name is plainly given as Babylon? Let us first look at Babylon the city (that was) on the bank of Euphrates. This chapter shews the complete destruction of this woman by the Beast and his associate kings at the end of this age. These same kings are overcome by the Lamb of God when He takes up His power. Babylon on Euphrates was desolated early in this era. and has never risen since. Therefore this woman cannot represent that city. Nor can it be possible for that city to have been drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs of Jesus. Rome, ecclesiastical, is the only system that can answer to the description. Then why is she called Babylon? This point is important. The fact is that the whole fabric of her worship is based upon heathen beliefs which came to Rome from Babylon. These can all be traced out if the reader wishes to do so from reliable encyclopedias and books written on the subject.

The woman and the child, saints days; Christmas and Easter, which come from the sun worship of Babylon; all this and much more can be traced back to that City.

When the book of the Revelation was written the priests of Babylon had been ejected from Babylon and were settled at Pergamos in Asia Minor. We find a reference to this in ch. 2.<sup>12, 13</sup>, "Satan's seat" and "where Satan dwelleth". In the second century when the Emperor Constantine was "converted" the church at Rome was relieved of its persecutions and became the state-church. The priests from Pergamos came to Rome and accepted the government of the church and interwove their feasts and observances and priestly functions into the Christian faith and from that developed the Roman Catholic system as it is today. Her power to persecute has been curtailed by the Reformation and she now has to work on other lines. But that she is the same at heart is manifest by the boycotting and disguised persecutions which still prevail in lands that she dominates.

Her aim has always been to get temporal power by "reigning over the kings of the earth". That is her hire.

"Babylon", however, does not refer to her origin only. At the end of the age she will return to her native place; and Zech. 5 prophesies this in a vision which fits no other interpretation.

Verses 5, 6, draw attention to an "ephah" going forth. This is the Hebrew measure that was in common use for corn, etc. Then notice, "*This* (sing.) is *their* (plural) resemblance throughout all the earth". This ephah resembles *them*. We shall see who they are as we proceed. The resemblance is world wide.

The next symbol is a talent of lead. Lead is one of the drosses of silver, and there are three passages that help us to interpret this. Ex. 15.<sup>10</sup>, referring to Pharaoh's hosts says, "they sank as lead in the mighty waters". This suggests *weight*, and is applied to a Gentile power. Jer. 6.<sup>29</sup> complains of Israel who should have been as pure silver (a people *redeemed* to God's praise) that they had become as reprobate silver (ver. 30). The fire of God's chastisement had blown upon them, but "the wicked were not plucked away". Ezek. 22.<sup>18-22</sup> makes this melting treatment plain. The time will come when Israel will be brought through the fire, and the wicked will be plucked away (Zech. 13.<sup>8, 9</sup>). And they will be purified as silver (Mal. 3.<sup>3</sup>). We gather from these passages that lead suggests *weight, government, dross* of silver, and rejected as having no part in God's covenant of redemption.

The next is a *woman* that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. She is cast into the ephah and the weight of lead is cast upon the mouth of the ephah. Can this woman be Israel in their sins (she is described as wickedness)? Israel never had and never will have a base of her own in Shinar. But the woman of Rev. 17 came from Babylon which was the capital of Shinar. It is her own base (ver. 11).

Then the prophet lifted up his eyes and saw *two* women come out of the ephah (ver. 9). And they had the wings of a stork. The Hebrew name for the stork is "pious". And the stork has some very commendable traits. It is almost revered in some of the European countries. But Lev. 11 declares it to be *unclean*. It has no part in God's economy.

Now if we piece this together we have a system rejected by God throughout. A religiously pious system, but it is *wickedness*. The ephah suggests commerce. This wicked system is in the midst of the commerce. Romanism has always been where the money is. She is the combination of religion and commerce. The weight of lead is the governments of the Gentiles which, specially since the Reformation, have restricted the activities of Rome.

The one woman that came out as two is the two parts of the Romish system, Rome (Papal) and the Greek Orthodox Church. There have been various attempts at reuniting these, and at the end they will at least work in co-operation to again make Babylon the seat of this system, when that city has been rebuilt.

The words "her own base" in ver. 11 are sufficient to shew the origin of Papal Rome : and surely ought to be sufficient to bar any child of God from touching any of its pollutions. And when we see that all state-church systems are her daughters, surely that should be sufficient to bar any child of God from touching them.

2 Thess. 2 gives further information that makes our interpretation sufficiently complete for the understanding of prophecy so far as God has been pleased to reveal it.

That the "man of sin" in ver. 3 is the Pope we can reject on very short examination. The cathedral at Rome is not the temple of God. The Pope does not claim to be God (ver. 4).

In order to refute the error that had troubled the saints at Thessalonica Paul assures them that the day of the Lord (for which they waited) would not come till after the Man of Sin has been revealed.

In describing him he gives the following details. "He opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped" (ver. 4). We have seen that whereas the King of Rome (Dan. 8 and 11) makes a covenant with Israel for seven years, he breaks it in the middle, does away with the sacrifices and sets up the abomination of desolation. For a time the Beast (the same person) is willing to carry the woman, in Rev. 17, but later he and his confederates burn her with fire. Thus Romanism is destroyed. Obviously that will be at the time when according to 2 Thess. 2 he will exalt himself above *all* that is called God. His image will be set up for worship and death will be prescribed for those who do not conform.

His further description is given in 2 Thess. 2.<sup>9-12</sup> : the signs and lying wonders corresponding with the miracles of Rev. 13.<sup>14, 15</sup> and Matt. 24.<sup>24</sup> (*after* the working of Satan = according to).

Verses 6 and 7 are the important ones for our present study. The withholding in ver. 6 is prefigured in the talent of lead in Zech. 5. The governments of earth are God's means of holding down the man of sin for the time being. Romanism is held in check by the Protestant nations, and it is this system the "woman" of Rev. 17 that dominates the political power of the Roman Catholic countries. So that by the non-Catholic countries holding down the ecclesiastical power (Zech. 5), the political power of Rome (the Man of Sin in 2 Thess. 2) is held back.

But the *mystery* of iniquity (lawlessness) is already working, compare Mystery in Rev. 17.<sup>5</sup>, but eventually the talent of lead will be removed, the governments of other nations will be no longer able to exercise the restraint and the Man of Sin will be revealed. The shaking of the power of Britain in the near East is significant in this connection.

The words "until he be taken out of the way" are a paraphrase rather than a translation, and have been taken to mean, without proof, that the Holy Spirit will be removed by the Church being caught up. But there is no ground for such an interpretation.

The actual words are "till out from the midst he shall become". And the meaning is clear, that this Man of Sin, the Wicked (or Lawless) one will arise out of the *mystery* of lawlessness, and will thus be revealed in his time.

We now have seen the meaning of her names in ch. 17.<sup>5</sup> The word "admiration" in ver. 6 must of course be understood according to the description given.

In ver. 7 the angel promises to tell John the mystery, or secret, of the woman and the beast that carries her. Ver. 8 makes some remarkable statements about this Beast. He was and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit. This pit being the place of confinement, the Hades (hell) of the New Testament, must surely signify that this Beast has lived on the earth before, and that his spirit is allowed by God to come back in some way to inhabit a human body again, probably recognizable as the one who lived before. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth. Mountains are sometimes used as figures of kingdoms (Psa. 30.<sup>7</sup>; Dan. 2.<sup>35</sup>). Thus we may see here seven nations upon which the woman exercises her power and thus they become the heads of the Beast's power politically. But ver. 10 speaks of seven kings as something quite different, for it is clear that they reign in succession, not together. They are seven kings of which the Beast is one who had fallen, but when he arises he will be the eighth. That is to say, that when John wrote toward the end of the first century, five of the great Roman Emperors who make their count in this seven had lived and died. One was then living, one was yet to come. That makes seven. One of them is to live again, so that he will be the eighth and is "of the seven". He is the Beast, the final head, who, when the seat of power is changed from Rome to Shinar (Zech. 5.<sup>10, 11</sup>) will be the King of Babylon of Jer. 50 and 51.

We now have to consider the *ten horns* (verses 12-14). Dan. 8 speaks of a *little horn* that comes up and displaces three of the first ones. In 11.<sup>41</sup> we see that this last King of the North (another of his titles) does not overcome Edom and Moab and the chief of Ammon. But in Psa. 83 we see that these three are included in the ten. Therefore, though three kings fall in the Dan. 7 view, they are replaced and the confederacy of ten is still complete when the Lamb overcomes them at His coming (Rev. 17.<sup>14</sup>).

Psa. 83 is an important part of our study, as it shews another view of that final overthrow of the Beast and his confederate forces. Particularly should verses 9-17 be considered with Isa. 10.<sup>5-27</sup> as well as with the other marginal references.

Now we come to the destruction of the woman, which dominated the Beast at first, but which is finally destroyed by him. This must be at the beginning of the 3½ years of the tribulation, for then the Beast will command worship to himself alone.

The subtle methods of the harlot system will find their match in the Devil-inspired head of this great power. He will be subject to the

woman with the object of being advanced to power by her religious influence upon the people. And when he is strong enough he will assert himself and she will be burnt up. We have already seen a foreshadowing of this in the revolution in Russia wherein the power of the Greek Orthodox Church was destroyed. The system however was not then completely obliterated, it still continues. But the destruction of Rev. 17 will be complete and final.

## CHAPTER 18.

This chapter gives us the destruction of the rebuilt city of Babylon. Many oppose this view, believing it to be a second view of the harlot system of ch. 17, that is, Romanism. But the time of the destruction will not permit of this, in addition to the fact that it does not fit other prophecies.

Protestantism is a very faulty thing. It is a *national* organisation, linked with the state and therefore part of the harlot system. Zeal for its own position has led to a number of illogical and improper actions, opposed to the true Christian calling. However, as we are dealing with prophecy, we will confine ourselves to that aspect. This zeal leads to reading the Pope into 2 Thess. 2 (the Man of Sin). It also interprets Rev. 18 as being the same as ch. 17. But it is all shallow and falls far short of the true interpretation.

Babylon (Babel) is first seen in Gen. 10. It was the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod, whose name means "we will rebel". As the people came eastward after the flood, they came to *Shinar* and decided to build a tower to make a name for themselves that they should not be scattered (ch. 11). But God confounded their language and the very thing they sought to avoid came upon them; they were scattered.

Babel became a city and has become the Devil's centre of operations in opposition to God's centre Jerusalem. Through Nebuchadnezzar the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed and the people of Israel went into captivity to Babylon. When Rome came into power and the Church spread through Europe, the priests of Babylon's idolatry came to Rome and the counterfeit for the true church was established; that system which has been drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs all through the "dark ages".

Pergamos was "Satan's seat" while those priests were operating there, and God's witness Antipas was slain there (Rev. 2.<sup>13</sup>). But Zech. 5 has shewn us that the corrupt system will return to *her own base* in Shinar, where her house will be built. Then *Satan's seat* will be at Babylon, and the Dragon will give to the Beast, the last King of Babylon, his power and his *seat* and great authority (ch. 13.<sup>2</sup>).

Now whereas the woman of ch. 17 is destroyed at the beginning of the tribulation period, we see from ch. 16.<sup>19</sup> that Babylon the city is not destroyed till the last vial of God's wrath. And we have seen from ch. 15 that the vials are poured out *after* the trumpets have all sounded.

It is therefore impossible that Babylon in ch. 18 is the same as *Mystery* Babylon in ch. 17.

In arriving at the true sequence of what follows the great voice in verses 2, 3, we must take notice of the logical bearing of one statement upon another. For instance, the merchants of the earth could not "wax rich" by her delicacies after she has fallen.

The tenses used here (particularly the *aorist*) are somewhat elastic and must be understood in accord with the sequence already revealed in the prophetic panorama. The merchandise of that great city will, we may well expect, be associated with a toll of some sort, exacted by the harlot system. It may be on the boycott principle. That is, if the merchants of the earth do not patronize the ecclesiastical system they will find themselves squeezed out. For we must remember the religious commercial principle in the woman and ephah.

When the whole system is transferred from Rome to Babylon with the woman *controlling* the Beast, such a system of toll would be what we might expect. Hence the reference to the kings, the peoples and the merchants of the earth being defiled and drinking of the wine of the wrath of her fornications.

This also will be associated with the presence of demon powers, the "birds" being symbolic of the Devil's agents in Matt. 13.<sup>19, 32</sup>. And all these things will require time to develop, so that they come to their full for the fall of that great city under God's judgments.

The call to God's people to come out of her in ver. 4 carries us back to two passages in the Old Testament that are of great value in the interpretation of prophecy. There have been interpretations of prophecy written that regard Babylon as having been destroyed beyond recovery, so that we cannot expect it to be rebuilt. But there are features of the fall of Babylon in Jer. 50 and 51 that have never yet been fulfilled: and ch. 50.<sup>4-8</sup> is one. Such a return of Israel, *fleeing* from Babylon has never yet happened; and Isa 48.<sup>20, 21</sup> bears like testimony. This great city must therefore be rebuilt to allow these things to be fulfilled. That this call corresponds to that of Isa. 48 and Jer. 50 is clear from the fact that the saints of this age are in heaven in ch. 15 and the destruction of Babylon is at the end of the vials of ch. 16. And as in ch. 7 we see a remnant of Israel sealed, but no more is said about them in this book, so here, the saints having been caught up, the remnant of Israel who happen to be in Babylon are called upon to flee before her judgment comes. But there the matter is left. The Prophets tell us about the return of that remnant to her land, the Book of the Revelation is not Jewish, and no more is said about them.

The various references in the verses that follow (5-11) to the Old Testament Prophets confirm that it is literal Babylon that is in view: and the beginning of Jer. 50 has shewn us that the fulfilment will be at the time when Israel are restored to their own land. The description of the merchandise in verses 12, 13, also adds to the literality of the

prophecy, while "bodies *and* souls" (see margin) also shews the religious and commercial aspects to be interwoven.

"The smoke of her burning" in verses 9 and 18 is only one aspect of her fall. In ch. 16.<sup>12</sup> the river Euphrates is dried up so that it will not be an obstacle to the Kings of the East. Jer. 51.<sup>11, 28-33</sup> shew that these are the kings of the Medes. They set the dry reeds on fire and the news that the city is taken is carried to the king of Babylon who is conducting his war in Palestine at that time. See also Dan. 11.<sup>44</sup>. The importance of firing these reeds is obvious from Jer. 51.<sup>32</sup>, it may be the means whereby the city is burned.

The fifth vial (ch. 16.<sup>10</sup>) and the seventh (16.<sup>19-21</sup>) shew the judgment of God from heaven. And Jer. 51.<sup>42, 63, 64</sup> shew that she will sink under the sea and never be any more.

The sorceries mentioned in Rev. 18.<sup>23</sup> are another indication of the corrupt religious nature of this city; at first by the woman—Romanism, and later, when that is destroyed at the time when the image of the Beast is set up, by the deceptions of the False Prophet. Both these systems have been guilty of the blood of prophets and saints, of Israel and the Church and all who will not submit to their domination. And again we may say, "Here is the patience and faith of the saints".

## CHAPTER 19.

To preserve the sequence of events clearly in our minds we must remember that the Church is caught up before the seven vials and therefore ver. 1 refers to the order in which John saw these things and not to the order in which they happen. If we go back to ch. 15—the Church in heaven, we see that the seven vials follow, bringing us to the fall of Babylon at the end of ch. 16. It would be difficult to say when the beginning of ch. 17 relates to, for the Papal system began to dominate the Roman Kings very early. But the end of that chapter brings us to the beginning of the tribulation period and a brief reference to the coming of Christ in judgment which will be after the seven vials. Ch. 18 is the time of the seventh vial. Now we come to the first clear view of the coming of Christ in judgment in ch. 19, with a glance back again first to the saints in glory, caught up at the seventh trumpet.

In ver. 1 the much people in heaven are saying, "Alleluia". This is the Hebrew expression so common in the Old Testament, "Praise ye the LORD". This is not found anywhere in the New Testament till we come to this chapter, and here we have it four times. That name "Jehovah" for which "LORD" is used in the Old Testament is not found in the New at all. The Greek definitely *avoids* using it. Obviously it is not intended to be used in this dispensation. But as soon as the saints are caught up they use it, because then God will begin to fulfil His word for the restoration of Israel as promised in all the Prophets.

When we think of Romanism in all its present glory, and then look at verses 2 and 3, and see her terrible doom, for ever and ever in hell

fire, and the words can mean nothing else, what can we say but echo the words "true and righteous are His judgments".

Ver. 4. Again we see the twenty-four elders and the four living ones are present and they fall down and worship and say "Amen" to the acclamation of the Church that God's judgments are true and just.

Verses 5-8 include other mighty voices beside that of the great multitude in ver. 6. Thus the angelic throngs join in the rejoicing that the marriage of the Lamb is come.

That "His wife hath made herself ready" is clear enough testimony the Lord will not come till she has accomplished this. And just as "the body" implies a unity in harmony so does "the bride". Ch. 12 has shewn us how this will be accomplished.

The word "righteousness" in ver. 8 is plural, "righteousnesses", and is a form of the word which distinguishes it from the *quality* of righteousness. It refers to righteous things which the saints have done and not the imputed righteousness which we have by faith, *without* works.

It is not said to be the "robe", which is the symbol of imputed righteousness: it corresponds to the raiment or garments of ch. 3.<sup>18</sup>.

In ver. 10 we have an example of the contrast between a created being—an angel, and the uncreated Lord, Jesus Christ. The angel refuses the worship in very short language, "See not". (The Lord Jesus never refused worship.) "I am the fellowservant of thee and of thy brethren", a more suitable rendering, preserves the distinction. The angel was not of the brethren of John, he belonged to a distinct and higher creation, but was nevertheless only a fellowservant.

John and his brethren had "the testimony of Jesus" entrusted to them. The angels "are sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1.<sup>14</sup>; Luke 15.<sup>10</sup>). And *the testimony of Jesus* is the *spirit* of prophecy: "As the body without the *spirit* is dead" so any prophecy which lacks the true testimony of Jesus is dead also.

The remainder of this chapter is occupied with the coming of Christ to execute judgment. A most glorious, wonderful and in some respects humiliating revelation.

The first detail is distinct from ch. 6.<sup>2</sup>. There we have a shew of righteousness and peace only to be displaced quickly by war, pestilence and famine. But here we see no reason to make the details merely symbolical, for we have abundant testimony that Christ will come personally to judge the nations upon the earth. And here is the glorious description. That the details have a symbolic value is quite true, but that does not nullify their literality. That there are spiritual horses in heaven seems beyond dispute from 2 Kings 2.<sup>11</sup>; 6.<sup>17</sup>, horses of spirit nature like the angels.

The first name mentioned is "Faithful and True". A reference to our Lord's faithful testimony on earth for which they put Him to death (ch. 3.<sup>14</sup>). Now He is seen in the place of judgment, "and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Psa. 45.<sup>3, 4</sup>).



"His eyes are as a flame of fire" compares with ch. 1.<sup>14</sup>; 2.<sup>18</sup>. There we see His unfailing and withering scrutiny among His people. Here we see the same among His enemies.

The "many crowns" are kingly crowns, distinct from the crowns of the victors in the games of Greece (1 Cor. 9.<sup>25</sup>; Rev. 3.<sup>11</sup>). Here it is the royal crown shewing that He has the sovereignty over all nations. This was sometimes expressed in Emperor's crowns by tiers or bands for the different countries over which they ruled.

The name which no man will know but He Himself reminds us of Matt. 11.<sup>27</sup>, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father". He is the incomprehensible eternal God that "became flesh".

The "garment dipped in blood" cannot refer to His crucifixion, for all His garments were removed. Yet it seems here that this garment is dipped in blood *before* He reaches the earth to commence the judgment. But Josh. 7.<sup>12</sup>; Psa. 44.<sup>7-9</sup>; 60.<sup>10</sup>; Isa. 59.<sup>17, 18</sup>, may help us in presenting the idea of His going forth, though unseen, with the armies of Israel of old, and Isa. 63.<sup>2, 3</sup> corresponds to Rev. 19, as if to present the thought of special garments of vengeance being put on for all these occasions. These would of course be figurative expressions but John saw Him as thus attired in the vision.

"And His name is called the Word of God". This is the name of a Person, the One Who was with God and *was* God from the beginning. See. Heb. 2.<sup>3</sup>, we make ourselves known by our *words*.

Now who are the "armies in heaven" that follow Him? Are they the saints or the angels? In 2 Thess. we see that He will come with His mighty angels (ch. 1.<sup>7, 8</sup>). But there are other passages that seem to leave no doubt that these are the saints who will come with Him as well as the angels. Rev. 2.<sup>26, 27</sup> says that He will give to the overcomers "as He received of His Father", not only to rule when the Kingdom is established but to "break them in pieces", which will be at His coming. See also Psa. 2.<sup>9</sup>. Deut. 33.<sup>1-2</sup>; Dan. 7.<sup>18</sup> and Jude verses 14, 15, speak of His coming with ten thousand of His saints. And if these passages are examined there seems to be no doubt that these armies in heaven are the saints who have been caught up at the last trump. Deut. 33 seems a little obscure, but though Sinai is mentioned, it can be that the coming with the saints refers to Seir, which is the country from which the Lord will approach the Holy Land. And it may be noticed that the law was not given for angels, but for men.

Dan. 7.<sup>18</sup> however seems quite clear, for the saints there will not only possess the kingdom, but "take" it. And the saints are those who have been "worn out" by the Beast.

One may well hesitate to apply such a position to the children of God. Our calling is not to avenge ourselves, and if the Spirit of Christ dwells in us we shall not do so. But we must remember that though the Lord Himself was led as a lamb to the slaughter, the wrath of the Lamb will be manifested in that day. The promise in Rev. 2.<sup>26, 27</sup> is made to the *overcomers*. And ch. 12 says that the overcomers loved not

their lives unto the death. So if we are like Him now in humble submission, we shall share with Him in the judgment when He comes. Whether we shall all be in these armies or only those who have overcome seems to be an open question, but we know that many that are first shall be last, and the last first.

There is nothing said about an armour here. While we are in the flesh we need the whole armour of God (Eph. 6.<sup>12</sup>), but it will not be necessary then. These are clothed in fine linen white and clean. And this corresponds to ver. 8 where we are told that the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. There will be the outward recognition then of those who have conducted their warfare against evil praiseworthy while pilgrims and strangers here.

The Lord has no *need* of these armies when He comes to smite the earth: the "sharp sword" that goes out of His mouth or even a look from those eyes would be all sufficient. We think how the mob in Gethsemane went backward and fell to the ground when He uttered those words, "I am He". But He is pleased to have those who have borne His reproach and suffered with Him to be with Him when He comes that they may share His triumph. May we be stirred to more faithfulness and devotion to Him Who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

That He is the One that treads the winepress of God's wrath (ver. 15) leaves no question as to Who it is that treads the winepress in 14.<sup>19</sup> and Isa. 63.<sup>1-4</sup>.

Ver. 16 gives us the third name or title that belongs to Him. The Faithful and True refers to His testimony on earth, recognized in resurrection: the "Word of God" expresses His essential deity: "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" is similar to yet higher than that which is ascribed to the kings of Persia and Babylon who ruled over many countries. In Phil. 2.<sup>5-11</sup> the name which is above every name is given to Him *because* of His humiliation as *man*. And all judgment is committed to Him because He is the Son of *Man* (John 5.<sup>27</sup>). It seems fitting that this title, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is the one that is given Him in Phil. 2.<sup>9</sup>. It expresses the exaltation and honour of His humanity in resurrection. The name Jehovah was His before He came into the world, He was the Christ while on earth, and the name Jesus was given Him from birth. He was born King of the *Jews*, but not King of Kings. Though, as God, He was a "Lord of Kings", as man He took limitations, and as the faithful servant earned the glory of the dominion of the whole earth. Thus when He comes forth to judge and to take His rightful place this title King of Kings and Lord of Lords is written on His thigh, a most conspicuous place when seated on the horse.

Verses 17-21 bring us on to that terrible display of God's righteous wrath upon this sinful world. Some, yea many, would have us believe that the world is improving, that by education and science combined with religion the human race will gradually develop a condition of

righteousness and brotherly love which will bring in everlasting peace and goodwill. God's testimony is just the opposite. Throughout Scripture we see that God foretells that iniquity will increase till the Lord Jesus comes in judgment to destroy His enemies and to establish righteousness under His own personal rule.

Here in these verses is a brief description of the great battle of Armageddon and that victorious march through the Land which leads up to it. The Old Testament provides fuller pictures of it, references to which have already been given.

The battle of Armageddon is not a battle of nations between themselves but "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (ch. 16.<sup>14</sup>), when iniquity is come to the full and the Man of Sin openly defies God with his confederacy of ten kings and their armies.

In ver. 20 we see that the Beast and the False Prophet are "taken" and "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone". This stands in sharp contrast to the remainder who are *slain* and whose flesh is devoured by the fowls of the air. This destruction of the "Assyrian" (another name for the King of Babylon) is seen in Isa. 30.<sup>27-33</sup>.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized, that *destruction* is not annihilation. 2 Thess. 2.<sup>8</sup> shews this one to be "consumed" and "destroyed", yet he is cast alive into the Lake of fire, "Tophet" being another name for the same place. And of the hosts that are with him Psa. 83.<sup>17</sup> says, "let them be confounded and *troubled* for ever". The awful destruction that will take place when the Lord comes is terrible to contemplate, but what of the sufferings of the lake of fire *for ever*.

## CHAPTER 20.

The "bottomless pit" of ver. 1 is another name for the "Hell" (hades) of Luke 16.<sup>23</sup>. Into this the Devil (the Dragon) is cast at the time of or immediately after, the great destruction of ch. 19. There he is confined for a *thousand years*. From this we see that, whereas the progression of the prophecy brought us several times up to this great event seen in 6.<sup>15-17</sup>; 11.<sup>19</sup>; 14.<sup>18-20</sup>; 16.<sup>17-21</sup>; 17.<sup>14</sup>; 18.<sup>1-24</sup> and 19.<sup>17-21</sup>, we now proceed for the first time, into the thousand years of Christ's reign upon earth. Dan. 7.<sup>18</sup> tells us this reign is "for ever, even for ever and ever", and Rev. 11.<sup>15</sup> tells us it is "for ever and ever," but the first thousand years will be upon this earth where He has been rejected, or nominally or even hypocritically acknowledged. This earth will then fulfil the glorious purpose that God intended with the seed of Abraham, Israel, as the leading nation. But nothing of this is mentioned in this Book. In this chapter we read that the resurrected saints will reign with Christ for the thousand years, nothing is said about Israel or the earthly conditions. That is revealed in the Prophets. This book deals with the Church and the nations.

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Footnote: See pamphlet "Tophet" free on request from author.

Verses 4-6 speak of the resurrection of the saints. It is *the first* resurrection. Therefore there is no resurrection before it. These were raised at the last trump. Now John sees them enthroned and judgment is given to them. See also Dan. 7.<sup>22</sup>; 1 Cor. 6.<sup>2, 3</sup>; Luke 22.<sup>28, 30</sup>. We notice that it includes those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and had not worshipped the Beast nor received his mark. Thus all the testimony agrees that the Lord will not come for His people until the seventh trumpet sounds.

Ver. 5 makes plain that the rest of the dead, those who are not blessed and holy (ver. 6) do not rise till the end of the thousand years. This should be remembered when reading of the resurrection in earlier passages in the Scriptures.

Another honour to the saints in that day will be that they will be priests of God and of Christ. Even now we have the privilege of a spiritual priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2.<sup>5</sup>; Heb. 13.<sup>15</sup>). But then the saints will occupy a position between the earthly nations and God, both as judges and priests. The *judgment*, in the sense of punishment, will soon be over when the Lord comes. Then He will establish His reign of righteousness and peace and universal blessing will result. Then Israel will have their earthly temple with animal sacrifices and ritual restored, and they and all the nations will have their own judges and governors (Jer. 23.<sup>1-4</sup>; 30.<sup>21</sup>). But there is evidently a higher ministry appointed for the resurrected ones, positions of authority over those mentioned in these passages just quoted. In view of these things we can be glad to be small and unimportant in this world now. If we can glorify Him by doing our part faithfully and keeping our consciences clear from the things that grieve Him, even though the world glories in them, that surely is sufficient satisfaction for the time being.

Verses 7-9 shew man's final rebellion against God. When we see the glory and blessedness of the reign of Christ on earth as revealed in the prophets, it hardly seems possible that such a vast number could willingly follow Satan's lead, when he is again released, to go up to war against the saints of that age. It shews how wilfully man goes after evil, even against the fullest light; the sin of this rebellion is as blameworthy as that by which Satan himself fell. How utterly corrupt is the human heart by choice, except it be preserved by the grace and power of God! How we need such a mighty Saviour as we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is evident from this that at the end of the Millennium it will be disclosed that some have not been in real heart-accord with their Divine Ruler, they have yielded but feigned obedience. But by the grace of God there will be those of all nations who really love their Lord and Saviour, and be His people, not only for the Millennium but for all eternity (Isa. 2.<sup>2, 3</sup>; Zech. 2.<sup>10, 11</sup>), for we see them again on the "new earth" in ch. 21.<sup>21-26</sup>.

When this final rebellion takes place God will tolerate sin no longer. Once the Lord commences His reign upon the earth sin will be met with swift judgment; and the fire will come down from God out of heaven and destroy these rebels. But again we must remember that destruction from off this earth is not annihilation; very shortly after this the final resurrection will take place and judgment follows.

Ver. 10 has been asserted to mean something different from what the Common English version clearly means, but the Common Version is true to the Greek—the Beast and the False Prophet, cast into the lake of fire a thousand years before (ch. 19.<sup>20</sup>) are still there when the Devil is cast in, and they will be tormented for ever and ever. The attempt has also been made to weaken the force of “for ever and ever” by saying that there will be no “day and night” in eternity. But the words “no night there” in 22.<sup>5</sup> refer to the city only, because the Lamb is the light of it. But the reference to a twelve monthly cycle of fruitbearing in 22.<sup>2</sup> shews that days, months and years will still continue in the new earth. The reference to “day and night” in 20.<sup>10</sup> is to emphasize that there will be no respite for those who are cast into that dread place (ch. 14.<sup>11</sup>).

If we believe that God has created all things, we should have no difficulty in believing that He can *uncreate* also. Ver. 11 says that He will. The heavens and the earth will flee away and there will be no place found for them. But we take this to refer to the starry heavens of course, not the place of God’s throne. Then the great white throne of judgment will be set up, and those who falsely condemned the Lord Jesus will have to stand before Him. But not only such, everyone will have to give His account, and Rom. 2.<sup>1-16</sup> makes it quite plain that none will be exempt.

We must remember, however, that at the first resurrection all the blessed and holy ones will have been raised to eternal glory: so that the unholy are left for the second resurrection. But during the thousand years in between, holy and unholy will die. Psalm 48.<sup>14</sup> is a Millennial psalm and ver. 14 shews that saved ones of Israel will die during that period, and Ezek. 44.<sup>25</sup> confirms this. So those who have died during the Millennium will be raised at this resurrection and those who are in the book of life will pass to the new earth, and those who are not will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the “hell” of which the Lord spoke in Mark 9.<sup>43-49</sup>.

Let us pause here for a moment to look at an Old Testament type. Solomon is a foreshadowing of the setting up of Christ’s kingdom on earth. At the beginning of his reign he executed judgment on some who had been spared in David, his father’s reign. And in 1 Kings 10.<sup>18-20</sup> we have a description of Solomon’s throne. The details of this are significant. It was made of ivory, and white suggests righteousness. It was covered with gold, best gold. This is a symbol of heavenly glory. These things are essentially true in the case of the Lord Jesus and His judgment throne.

Solomon's throne had six steps leading up to it. This has a counterpart too in the case of our Lord. Phil. 2 has shewn us that it is His humiliation that has led to this exaltation, that every knee should bow to Him. And his obedience, even to a death of a cross, are the steps to his position as Judge of all the earth. Each step downwards has meant a step upwards in resurrection glory. Humiliation in obedience to God's word is the truest exaltation.

Phil. 2.<sup>7</sup> gives us the first of these steps. The words "made Himself of no reputation" are really "emptied Himself". This, of course, only One Who is "equal with God" could do. And no human mind can comprehend its fullness. This led to the further step of incarnation, taking upon Himself the nature of the creatures He had made, "the Word became flesh". The third step is circumcision, by which He became a debtor to do the whole law (Gal. 5.<sup>3</sup>). The fourth is baptism, not for the forgiveness of sins, He had none. But the taking of a position which brought upon Himself the hatred of the world and finally His crucifixion. The fifth is death itself. This again is an act of obedience which no mere human can do. For He said plainly that no man took His life from Him, He laid it down of Himself in obedience to His Father's commandment. A voluntary act. The sixth is resurrection. That also is an act of obedience. God cannot die, so having laid down His human life (soul), He took it again, all in obedience to his Father's will (John 10.<sup>17, 18</sup>). "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him". And here in Rev. 20 we see the great white throne where He sits to judge.

The number six signifies a completed work. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God". The Lord's sixth act of obedience brought Him to resurrection, then He "sat down" at the right hand of God. Six days work without the seventh day of rest would not be perfection, as seven signifies. So Solomon's throne foreshadows this "great white throne" in Rev. 20.

The use of both words, "death and hades" in verses 13 and 14, is not mere repetition, neither is *hades* the *grave*. Luke 16.<sup>19-31</sup> shews us what hades is, and the two keys which the Lord holds will be brought into use when He opens both death (that is the resurrection of the dead bodies) and hades (that is, bringing out their souls from prison) and both will be cast into the lake of fire (Matt. 10.<sup>28</sup>).

This lake of fire is called "the second death". It does not say that they are cast in there to die. Death is a state of existence, used figuratively for our state, "dead in sins", before being quickened by the Spirit of God (Eph. 2.<sup>5</sup>), and God does not use figures of speech that are not suitable (Prov. 26.<sup>7</sup>).

Ver. 15 implies that there will be some at this time found written in the book of life. And we have seen from the Old Testament that there will be saved ones who will die during the thousand years of Christ's reign.

By the time the Lord Jesus comes to reign man will have been on the earth about six thousand years. But the dates given in the margins of our Bibles are not strictly dependable and we cannot say exactly how far we are from the six thousandth year. During all that time God has been striving with man (John 5.<sup>17</sup>). The Millennium, the seventh thousand years is God's rest, a keeping of sabbath (Heb. 4.<sup>9</sup>), when the Son of God will reign. All being entrusted to His hand, righteousness and peace will prevail. But that will be broken for a short period at the end, as ch. 20.<sup>7-9</sup> has shewn us. Now we come to a new order of things altogether. In ver. 1 John saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth will have passed away.

Here again we need to be clear as to the question of what is symbolic. Does this mean that a new universe will be created, or does it refer to a new order of things on this earth? The first mention of this is in Isa. 65.<sup>17</sup>. Here the word "create" is the same as in Gen. 1.<sup>1</sup>. The context goes on to speak of Jerusalem being created a rejoicing and her people a joy. That is a Millennial prophecy; then a work of grace will take place in the remnant of Israel, they will then be born of the Spirit of God. And that is not reformation, it is a new creation (2 Cor. 5.<sup>17</sup>). Something comes to exist within the person which did not exist before. So in the Isaiah passage God likens the wonderful change to the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the creating of the new heavens and the new earth. In Isa. 66.<sup>22</sup> we have another related prophecy. In this case it is a promise of the continuance of the seed of Israel for the duration of that new heaven and new earth, which is, of course, for ever and ever. Moreover, the words here imply that this present creation will not remain.

In Gen. 2.<sup>3</sup> we have both the words "create" and "make". And a little thought makes the difference clear. A man can *make* a box out of wood that already exists. But new *fashions* are said to be *creations* because the *design* did not exist before; that has nothing to do with the material. But according to Gen. 1 and 2 God created first and then made. So, as Isaiah says that God will create a new heavens and new earth, Rev. 21.<sup>5</sup> says, "Behold I *make* all things new".

In 2 Pet. 3.<sup>5-7</sup> we see that it was the "world" (the ordered arrangement on the earth) that perished. But the heavens and the earth are still preserved with a view to the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Ver. 10 goes on to say that the heavens and the earth are to be burned up. Ver. 12 repeats the dissolution of these and 13 goes on to speak of the new heavens and earth. Such testimony can hardly be the expression of a reformation. We shall see further evidence to confirm this later in the chapter.

That there will be no more sea on the new earth, implies that the sea is not an unmixed blessing. Isa. 57.<sup>20</sup> and Jer. 49.<sup>23</sup> associate it with sorrow, trouble, unrest, the wicked are likened to it and the sea casting

up mire and dirt depicts the ungodly who bring forth evil out of their evil hearts. It also speaks of separation and death. All these things will cease to be on that new earth.

In ver. 2 John sees the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. This implies that it is already existing and peopled for it is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband". In v.v. 9, 10, the city is actually called the bride: and we know that the marriage of the Lamb took place a thousand years before this (ch. 19.<sup>7</sup>).

In John 14.<sup>2, 3</sup> the Lord said that He would go and prepare a place for His own and come again and receive us to Himself that we might be with Him where He is. And that is in the Father's house of many *mansions* (this word implies a place that remains—it is not temporary). Rev. 3.<sup>12</sup> promises to the overcomer that he "shall go no more out". And in this chapter (21) we have a brief description of this glorious place, when it comes down from heaven upon the new earth.

But before we come to the actual description there, a little is said about the conditions on the new earth itself. Not a description of the material life, we must wait till we see that to know what it is like, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him". True the next verse in 1 Cor. 2 says, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit". "But we only know in part". And though we know that we shall be *like* our Lord, "We know not what we shall be".

But the first point of ver. 3 is that the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them. In Ex. 25.<sup>8</sup> God said, "let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them". And the people made the sanctuary as Moses commanded. But they soon defiled it, and after long forbearing with them God at last destroyed it. But in His mercy he granted a restoration and it was rebuilt. But again it was defiled, not by idolatry, but by hypocrisy. So that the chief priests were foremost in putting His beloved Son to death. Again it was destroyed and has never been built again. But in the Millennium God will have a new temple built and the children of Israel will no more defile it (Ezek. 40-48). But at the end of the thousand years, the whole earth will be done away. Then will come in this new order of things, a new earth, with the holy *city*, the New Jerusalem, as the sanctuary.

The tabernacle in the wilderness was a *pattern* of things in the heavens (Heb. 9.<sup>23</sup>). In this New Earth arrangement we see the heavenly sanctuary itself come down upon the earth. The tabernacle of God being with men, here, does not refer to the Church but to the saved nation of Israel and the other saved nations who are blessed through the Millennium. The Church will have been already inhabiting that city for a thousand years by the time it comes down on to the new earth. We have the right to enter into it now, in the spirit; and as soon as the Lord comes for us it will be "home" to us, the Father's house.

So speaking of these nations saved in the Millennium, God says that



He will 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 have passed away. And we must remember that death does take place during the Millennium, and therefore sorrow results. Then He says, " Behold I make all things new ". Then He tells John to write something for the encouragement of the saints for the time of their pilgrimage and tribulation while here. The first promise is " to him that is athirst ". No mere religious profession. " Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for *they* shall be filled. To such God promises to give " of the fountain of the water of life freely ". " He that drinketh of the water that I shall give Him shall never thirst " said Christ. It is either life eternal or the unquenchable fire for ever. And if one *thirsts* He may come and be satisfied. But there is something further, " He that *overcometh* shall inherit these things, and I will be *his* God, and *he* shall be my son ". This precious promise is only given to those who *overcome*. The question is asked in 1 John 5.<sup>4</sup>, " Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? " We see then what God's standpoint is, every believer—true believer—is an overcomer. Such have life. Such are the children of God. God has no regard to nominal Christianity, to Him it is hypocrisy and it will be cast out of His sight.

There are but two classes, either you are an " overcomer ", or you are classed with those who are mentioned in ver. 8 and will share their fate.

Ver. 9 now brings us to the description of the city itself. The Bride of this verse, is the " great city the holy Jerusalem " in ver. 10 which John sees descending from heaven.

The thought that this portion, up to 22.<sup>5</sup>, or even to 21.<sup>27</sup>, is Millennial in its application upsets the construction of the book. We have seen that we have been progressing step by step all through ; and that if we go back over a period it is to have some new aspect presented which belongs to that same period. But here the heavenly Jerusalem is not introduced till the new heaven and new earth are created. At ver. 3 the sequence of thought was broken off to shew that when this city comes down, the tabernacle of God will be with men, the nations who are saved after the Church is taken to glory. To suppose that this city is *over* the earthly Jerusalem in the Millennium makes a great problem as to the nations " bringing their glory and honour into it. And from the size of it there is no place on earth that could take it. The only view that fits at all is, that the Millennium is not the subject of this book : and all that is said about it is in ch. 20.<sup>4</sup>. These last two chapters are occupied solely with the ultimate position to which the Church will be brought, with sundry exhortations for the time of our sojourning here.

The first thing that strikes John when he sees this city, is the light. God is light. The city is built of jasper, clear as crystal. So that the

light of the city penetrates the walls and the whole is luminous as he sees it descend. We may well pause and wonder before we go further. But let us not hesitate to accept these details as literal. If we attempt to make them figurative, or spiritual and not material we shall have nothing tangible at the end. We shall be raised from the dead and have *bodies* like the Lord had. And in those bodies we shall inhabit this New Jerusalem. And here is the plain description of our glorious home.

It had "a wall great and high", and twelve gates each one bearing the name of one of the tribes of Israel. This does not imply that Israel inhabit it. If we remember that this is God's tabernacle and we think back to the tabernacle in the wilderness, we find in Numb. 2 that when the tabernacle was pitched, the twelve tribes pitched their tents around it, three tribes on each side of it. Then if we remember that we, as those of a heavenly priesthood, have the privilege of entering into the holiest of all in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9.<sup>9</sup>), we can see that the New Jerusalem just corresponds to that. We inhabit the city, and the saved nation of Israel—saved in the Millennium—have their positions round about the city each tribe opposite the gate that bears its name. This interpretation of the names being on the gates is based upon the fact that the tabernacle in the wilderness was a pattern of things in the heavens (Heb. 9.<sup>23</sup>), and that it fits with the other details that follow.

The city is the "Bride" and ver. 14 tells us that the foundations had in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. We can hardly escape the connection here with Eph. 2.<sup>20</sup>, the same Epistle using the figure of husband and wife to express the relation of Christ and the Church in ch. 5.<sup>22-33</sup>.

As a further point of connection between the tabernacle in the wilderness and this city, the dimensions of it are interesting. The holiest of all was ten cubits each way, length, breadth, and height, foursquare. The city is the same in shape, so the tabernacle is a pattern in this respect. But what of the size! Twelve thousand furlongs! But are we to take this as literal. Why not? Why not as literal as the twelve names in the gates and the foundations? Yes, literally twelve thousand furlongs—one thousand five hundred miles. Suppose we stand at one corner and look along one side—fifteen hundred miles—then we look along the other side—fifteen hundred miles. No, we can't appreciate what it means. But now we look up—fifteen hundred miles high! We accept the figures as they are given, but we wait for "the day" to be able to appreciate it. And the angel measured the wall (for thickness) one hundred and forty-four cubits (roughly 200 ft.). Not at all thick for the height, but God is the builder of this city (Heb. 11.<sup>10</sup>).

Ver. 18 needs no explanation. The jasper and the gold there will be the purest possible. No dross whatever in it. But of course it all has a moral significance, nothing defiled will ever enter there.

Verses 19, 20. We notice that each foundation is garnished with a different stone, and each one bears a different name. If there is some connection between the nature of the precious stone and the person

with whom it is associated it would not be surprising, but God has not revealed that connection. Nor do we even know which stone is associated with a particular person. It is well that we leave it to be revealed when we are there.

Ver. 21. The pearl is produced by the oyster in this world, but God is not limited. He can create what He pleases without restriction as to size or quantity.

Here also is given a further emphasis on the purity of the gold. With such a description of the dimensions and material of this city God has erected a barrier to all speculation as to what these things *mean*. There is not a single word to suggest that any of these things are figurative, and in a book of revelation God has not left the matter for us to interpret according to our imagination. We know what that place is like, so far, and what we do not know we can well leave till we see it for ourselves.

Ver. 22. Here in few words is stated the greatest contrast between this New Jerusalem and the earthly one. God chose mount Moriah as the site for His earthly house from the time that He told Abraham to offer up Isaac. There the temple stood, has been destroyed completely twice, and has yet to be built again. But there will be no temple built in the New Jerusalem. In the temple God dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat (Numb. 7.<sup>89</sup>; 1 Sam. 4.<sup>4</sup>; Psalms. 80.<sup>1</sup>, etc., etc.). That mercy seat was in the holiest of all which we have seen was of the same shape as this city, a pattern of things in the heavens. In this new creation the "Father's house" and the temple are merged into one. The Lord has gone to prepare us a place there, where all will be sanctified by the presence of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. Their presence and power and holiness pervade the whole and thus constitute it the temple.

Ver. 23. We have no right to conclude that there will be no sun or moon over the new earth. No such statement is made. What we are told is that the *city* had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine *in it*. And we must not go beyond what is stated. The glory of God enlightens that city, and the LAMB is the light thereof.

The opening view was the light of *the city* (ver. 11). But the final statement as to this part of the description is to emphasise that all her light is derived from the Lamb. God has appointed that in all things He shall have the pre-eminence.

Ver. 24. This verse, with ver. 26 clearly indicates that there will be "nations" inhabiting the new earth. There will be no night in the city, so the gates cannot be shut by night; and as it is stated that they will not be shut by day, it is made emphatic that they will not be shut at all. So that whenever these nations will, they may bring their glory and honour into it.

Zech. 14.<sup>18-19</sup> makes a helpful comparison with this. There we have the Millennial view of the worship brought to God to the restored earthly Jerusalem and her temple. At the feast of tabernacles, which was the "feast of ingathering at the years end", the people brought their

offerings up to Jerusalem to present them to God. And in that day this will be revived and not only Israel, but all the nations that are left from the judgment spoken of in Zech. 12-14 will participate in this yearly homage to God, recognizing that He is the giver of all. We therefore see that on the new earth God will have a similar arrangement, except that it will not be one feast of seven days, but continuously, all the year round, they will bring their glory and honour into it.

Ver. 27. Dear reader, are you *sure* that you are washed from your sins in the precious blood of Christ, and that your name is written in the Lamb's book of life? This verse clearly states that if not you will never enter that holy place. How grateful should all who have the assurance of His grace toward them be—redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

## CHAPTER 22.

As we now consider further details of the interior of the city, we do well to make another comparison with the prophecy of the Millennial conditions, this time from Ezekiel as well as Zechariah. In Ezek. 47.<sup>1-12</sup> we have the description of a river going out from under the threshold of the temple in Jerusalem. This river increases in depth as it goes, till it became a river that the prophet could not pass over. It passes on through the Dead Sea healing its waters so that it abounds in fish. It passes on southward, but the marshes of Edom are not healed. They are left as a memorial of God's judgment upon sin. That is the land spoken of in Isa. 34 where the Lord descends to commence His march of judgment through the land. Now Zech. 14 completes the picture for us. Ver. 8 tells us that these living waters shall go out, half toward the former sea, and half toward the hinder sea.

By comparing this with Rev. 22, we see similitudes, but there is also the great contrast in that there will be no sea in the new earth for the river to run into. But if we go back to God's first garden in Eden (Gen. 2.<sup>10-14</sup>) we see there also that the river starts as one, and then divides into four.

Rivers, as we know them, *drain* the land. These rivers *watered* the land. There was no rain then, only dew. So we conclude that these rivers broke up and spread themselves over the whole country. In the new earth may we not conclude that this river will do the same.

But there is a spiritual lesson in this. Rivers are always receiving more and more as they go along to the sea. Every little tributary adds to the main stream, and we may say the river is never satisfied. How like human nature. Everyone on the look out for some means of enriching himself. How unlike the teaching and example of Christ. He expended Himself doing good to others. So in God's first garden and in the new earth when man is reconciled to God all will be on His principle. The river will flow out from His throne, the only source of blessing, and will disperse itself among the nations who will gladly bring their glory and honour into the city to worship Him who not only

gives "all things richly to enjoy", but Who gave His only begotten Son that He might redeem us from the curse by becoming a curse Himself.

The tree of life does not mean one tree, of course, there will be a line of these trees along each side of the river as it flows along the centre of the street, out from the throne of God, of that great city.

The fruit of the tree of life is very remarkable. It is not only brought forth every month, but there is a different kind each month. Truly there is no limitation with God.

But there is something else to be learned from this. Twelve manner of fruits, and the fruit yielded every month shews a cycle of twelve months being repeated—that is, a yearly cycle. A month consists of days (30 days in the Old Testament, and in prophecy in the New). Therefore there will still be a reckoning of time by days, months and years in the eternal state. Thus, "there shall be no night there", in ver. 5 refers only to the *city*, conditions on the remainder of the new earth are not described.

The words "the leaves of the tree were for the *healing* of the nations" seems to present a difficulty in view of the blessed state of no more sorrow nor crying, nor pain. But the word need not mean *healing*. It is used generally in that sense, but there are other usages of it. The word is "therapeia". It is used in Matt. 24.<sup>45</sup> and Luke 12.<sup>42</sup>, translated "household", where it obviously means the staff of *servants*. In Acts 17.<sup>25</sup> it is translated "worship" (therapeuō). Obviously *service* to God. And in Heb. 3.<sup>5</sup> it is translated "servant" (therapōn) where Moses is seen to be the chief *servant* of God in His house. This then seems to present the thought that these leaves are to be used by the nations in their "service" to God. The "palms in their hands", in ch. 7.<sup>9</sup> may suggest a token of victory through Christ, or have a reference to the pilgrimage through earth's desert. Whatever they signify their mention there helps us to see that the leaves of the tree of *life* may be an expression of gratitude for that marvelous gift of eternal life which is the basis of all blessing, and is absolutely by grace and not by works.

"There shall be no more curse", ver. 3, is likewise speaking of the city, for "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it". But this does not imply that the curse will exist on the new earth outside the city, we can hardly think that it would, seeing that "the tabernacle of God is with men" (21.<sup>3</sup>). But when we see that the *statement* "no more curse" applies to the city and nothing else, it defeats the annihilation's misuse of it: for they say, "there shall be no more curse anywhere", to deny eternal torment.

By comparison of ver. 4 with 14.<sup>1</sup> we see that it is the Father's name that is written in their foreheads, therefore it is also true that we shall see the *Father's face*, and not only see the Father in Christ. The statements that no man can see God and live, and that no man hath seen Him or can see, must therefore be understood to refer to man in his mortal state.

And again, in ver. 5, we must understand that "no night there"

refers to the *city*. For it is those that inhabit the city that *reign* for ever and ever. The populace of the earth will have kings who reign over them (21.<sup>24</sup>). Therefore, it cannot be said that the people themselves reign. But it is promised to those who are in the *first* resurrection that they shall reign with Christ a thousand years. These are seen to be seated on thrones of judgment in 20.<sup>4</sup>, and in ch. 5.<sup>10</sup>, it is said that they shall reign on the earth. Up to chapter 20 the eternal state is not revealed. So we see that a thousand years reign on the earth is promised, up to that chapter, but in the eternal state we reign *for ever and ever*.

This is the conclusion of the prophecy, but there will be no conclusion to its fulfilment. What a prospect! What shall we render unto our God for such a salvation that cost so much and yet is perfectly free. Truly, love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Ver. 6 gives us the authority for this book, as it is also given at the beginning. We therefore should be the more impressed with the solemnity of altering the meaning of a single word, as many are doing to support their theories. God has respect to those that *tremble* at His word.

In ver. 7 a blessing is promised to the one that keeps the sayings of this book. Many put it aside, including those who are regarded as "ministers" of Christ, afraid to look at it.

Permit me a personal word here. In 1907 or 8 I began to read the "Book of the Revelation". I read it through and through. I noted the connections with the Book of Daniel. The *sayings* of the book became inscribed on my heart and mind, without any effort to "memorise". Shortly after, the words "this is the first resurrection" came to mind as I read a book someone gave me. I had no more time for that book. Those same words have been used of God to deliver from or ward off other things since. Keep the *sayings* of this book, they mean just what they *say*; and are to be understood literally unless there is something associated with them that indicates that they are figurative. Thus the whole is seen to be perfectly harmonious and understandable.

The fact that John fell down a second time to worship at the feet of the angel (ver. 8) shews how much he was impressed by what he saw. We only read. He actually saw and heard. But again he is quickly rebuked and told to worship God.

The *sayings* of this prophecy were not to be sealed (ver. 10). In ch. 10.<sup>4</sup> there is an exception, the "seven thunders" John was told to seal up. Daniel was told to seal up *some* of the things that were revealed to him (Dan. 12.<sup>9</sup>). But in Isa. 29.<sup>9-12</sup> we see that the "vision of all" had become sealed. That which the people should have known, they did not, and their teachers could not tell them. The Book of the Revelation should have been the precious portion of the children of God from the time John wrote it till now. But so many false *interpretations* of it have been given that it is now discarded by almost all.

Ver. 11 seems to be understandable only by recognizing that the book as a whole is occupied, from ch. 4 onwards, with the time of the end of this age. The immediate context of this verse is not the eternal state ; we have in this closing portion sundry exhortations, which stand individually ; and this verse is in a context concerned with the coming of Christ for His Church. The Lord said that the days immediately before His coming would be like the days of Noah and of Lot. In those days there was *no* response to the warnings given. In ch. 11 there is no repentance even when the two witnesses are raised from death and called up to heaven in the sight of men. And the same applies when the angel flies through the midst of heaven with the everlasting Gospel. So it seems that far from what some are expecting, a great ingathering of souls, in the last days, there will be an unprecedented dearth. So—" he that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and so on ".

" Behold, I come quickly " is capable of two meanings, it can be " swiftly " or " soon ". We know that when the Lord comes it will be swiftly, like the lightning ; but if we have in mind that the context is speaking of the end time, when " the time is at hand ", the word " soon " would be quite fitting, in contrast to the terms used by the Lord when He was here, " The end is not yet " (Matt. 24.<sup>4-14</sup>) ; and " like a man travelling into a far country " (Matt. 25.<sup>14</sup>) ; and the Epistles of Paul to Timothy speaking of the last days.

Ver. 13 is a blessed reminder of the deity of our Lord Jesus. The titles that signify godhead from everlasting to everlasting are claimed by the Almighty God in 21.<sup>6</sup> and here in 22.<sup>13</sup> they are likewise claimed by Jesus Christ. By comparing this with ch. 1.<sup>8</sup> and <sup>11</sup> we see this twofold testimony to the essential deity of our glorious Lord.

For " blessed are they that do His commandments " the manuscript evidence generally accepted is, " blessed are they that wash their robes ". This is a word of encouragement for all time to sinners to come for justification, just as ver. 17 is an invitation to come for " life " (see remarks on ch. 7.<sup>14</sup>). Being thus washed in the blood of the Lamb, all such will have *right* to enter into the city and partake of the wonderful fruit of that tree of life.

But there is a place " without ". Without where ? Without the sphere of blessing. Thus, in the final view that we are given of that glorious place there is the solemn testimony to that place where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

*The dogs and the sorcerers*, etc., seems to imply all of that class, just as " *whosoever* loveth and worketh a lie ". " Business lies ", " white lies ", lies that are acted though not spoken, all will be judged from the standpoint of God's truth. May we who are washed in the blood of Christ, keep our garments clean by the power of the Holy Spirit.

According to ver. 16 these things were intended to be known throughout the churches from the time that John received them right on till Christ shall come. Yet it is discarded as a book of riddles that no one can explain by the majority of Christians today. If we believe that the

coming of the Lord is drawing near, surely we should give time to these things to master them, to be satisfied, by diligent study and testing of the many errors that are associated with it, that we really have the mind of the Lord on the whole.

The Devil is alert and he has taken advantage of the ignorance of God's children to spread his conflicting counterfeits by which he deceives those whose minds are blinded.

We have abundant testimony to the deity of Christ in the Scriptures, and we need not go out of our way to make more. If we do we only play into the hands of those who oppose the truth, for some of them are very quick to discern a weakness and make use of it. The words "root and offspring of David" have been taken by some, with the best of intentions, to assert both the deity and humanity of Christ. But if "the offspring of David" shews descent and therefore the same nature—human—as David (and it does), then "the root of David", if it meant the one from whom David sprang, would imply that David was born with the Divine nature. Isa. 11.<sup>1</sup> speaks of a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch out of his roots. Note the plural "roots". So in ver. 10 we read of "a root of Jesse". This obviously means a root taken from the roots of Jesse, and not a root from which Jesse came. So, "the root of David" in Rev. 5.<sup>5</sup> is made parallel with "the Lion of the tribe of Judah". And so in ch. 22.<sup>16</sup>, the root and offspring of David both refer to his humanity, giving a balancing view after ver. 13, which asserts His Deity.

The bright and morning star is a word of comfort to all the saints in this dark night of *man's* day. The Lord does not say, "I will *come* as the morning star": but "I *am* the bright and morning star". He is the herald of the morning at all times to His people, the pledge that the day is coming when He, the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings (Mal. 4.<sup>2</sup>). We have a similar view in 2 Pet. 1.<sup>19</sup> where the word of *prophecy* is the light so much needed while we wait for the "lightbearer" (not "day star") to arise.

Meanwhile, the believer has "the Morning Star" for his encouragement and "the confirmed *word* of prophecy" for his guidance. And if we do not take heed to the prophetic word, and see that we get the true teaching of it, we shall surely err and suffer spiritually.

Ver. 17. There arises a question here as to whether the call to "come", in the first two sentences is addressed to Christ or to the needy sinner; the second two seem to be closely connected with the first in their nature. And therefore imply an urgent call to sinners to "come" while it is yet the acceptable time, and take of the water of life freely.

Verses 18 and 19 contain such a solemn threat that we can only believe that a true child of God would be preserved by the power of God from either "adding to" or "taking away from" the words of this book, in the sense that is intended here.

In John's days there were "Antichrists" already working, denying the Father and the Son. And we can well understand that some such



might dare to actually delete parts or add spurious statements. But it may be said, such have no part in the tree of life. The threat is that anyone taking from the book will have *his* part taken away from the tree of life and out of the holy city. Can it be that one who is truly a child of God can be eternally lost ?

After the solemn words of Matt. 12.<sup>31, 32</sup> concerning the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Lord says in ver. 33, " Either make the tree good and his fruit good ; or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt : for the tree is known by his fruit ". Surely this is meant to imply that " a good tree ", one born of the Spirit of God, will be preserved from such blasphemy because of the Holy Spirit which abides in him.

There is a helpful example of this principle in Acts 27.<sup>22-32</sup>. In ver. 22 Paul declared that there would be no loss of any man's life among them ; because he had been assured of that by an angel of God. But when the shipmen attempted to abandon the ship by boat, Paul said, " Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved ". That sounds quite contradictory to what he had said before. But the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat and let her fall off. The shipmen had therefore to remain in the ship by compulsion, and there was no loss of life. Heb. 10.<sup>38, 39</sup> give a similar safeguard against the thought that a truly justified one will draw back *unto perdition*.

Heb. 9.<sup>28</sup> also says, " Unto them that *look for Him* shall He appear ". But surely when the conditions of Rev. 12 are fulfilled all true believers will be looking for Him. And if this principle is carried into Rev. 22.<sup>18, 19</sup> can we not see that the solemn threat may be used to withhold a true child of God from so tampering with this book. The full severity of the censure in 1 Cor. 5.<sup>5</sup> was not carried out, because its very severity was used by God to bring repentance.

But we must not overlook the fact that some children of God are reading their own prophetic teachings into some of the statements of this book, and though not " adding " or " taking away " in the sense that is meant here, they certainly are distorting the meaning when, for instance, " stages " are introduced into the " first resurrection " to make it fit the belief that 1 Thess. 4.<sup>15-18</sup> takes place before the tribulation ; and the conclusion of the " mystery " at the seventh trumpet is explained away for the same purpose. May God grant that all His dear children may repent of this kind of thing and humbly acknowledge the simple and clear testimony of these passages.

The One Who testifies these things saith, " Surely, I come quickly ". Let each one that reads ask himself whether he " loves His appearing " sufficiently, even in the face of the coming tribulation, to return the answer, " Even so, come, Lord Jesus ". Surely if we appreciate the cost of our redemption, and the glory that He will enter into even here where He was rejected, we shall be longing to see Him reigning.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

AMEN.

If the reader is interested in other literature on Scriptural subjects the author will be pleased to meet any requests as the Lord enables.

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# REV 20<sup>10-15</sup>

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There is no reason to think that in Matt. 24. <sup>29</sup>, or in any parallel passage, i.e. ~~Mark~~ <sup>13</sup>; Acts 2. <sup>20</sup>; Rev. 6. <sup>12-14</sup> did not happen concurrently. And so in the flood, Gen. 7. <sup>11</sup>. Therefore in Rev. 20 there is no ground for thinking that the details mentioned in verses 10-15 will extend over a period of time.

We may all have wondered whether the books in verse 12 are literal or not. But we know that God does not need them.

And what a time it would take to have all the millions of persons to pass before the great white throne and have all their sins read before them! Incidentally the same applies to the judgment of 1 Cor. 3. <sup>12-15</sup>. We know that God can deal with men all over the globe at the same time and cause conviction of sin. And is it not feasible that at the last resurrection the wicked will be made conscious of their sins, perhaps, by each one having a vision of a book which he will never forget? Luke 16. <sup>25</sup> "son remember" may have a bearing on this.

Satan showed the Lord "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (Luke 4. <sup>5</sup>). In writing, only one thing can be mentioned at a time though several may happen together: e.g. in recording a collision on a railway. So in Rev. 20. <sup>10-15</sup>, is there any objection to the thought that all that is mentioned there will happen together, "in a moment of time"?

H.G.H.