

THE
REVELATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.

It should not be forgotten, that when God gave this “Revelation of Jesus Christ” to His servant John, the substance of this book was new; supplementary to all the revelations of Jesus which had gone before. It will be found of the first importance to bear this in mind in all our meditations on this blessed book: and, whilst the study of this book requires acquaintance with the whole word of God, yet we must not confound this with the revelations which had gone before. Even the introduction is new, and different from any other book. This blessed revelation of Jesus is given of God to the servants of Jesus Christ. How marked this is! It is not to the saints in Christ Jesus, as in some of the precious epistles, but “unto his servants.”

As the Holy Ghost has made this distinction, let us meditate a little upon it. A person may be saved, and if saved certainly a saint, for ever perfected in Christ Jesus: “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10:14.) To be thus saved is the portion of every true believer in Christ. — But how few can say with Paul, “a servant of Jesus Christ;” “separated unto the gospel of God.” Very few walked in this path with the devoted Paul. With sorrow he had to say, when speaking of many saints, “For all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” What a searching word for both the writer and the reader! How far are we separated to the service of Jesus Christ?

I was going to ask you a question as to this, but before I do so, let us read Revelation 1:5. You will observe this text tests you. If this is the language of your heart; if you can say to Jesus, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,” then surely you are saved. This is the language of none but the saved; and it is the language of all the saved. It is not Unto Him and unto me. Now can you look up into heaven, and say, There is the blessed One, who loved me and washed me from my sins in His own blood? O how simple and how certain! I do not say, I hope He will, but it is done. If you are thus saved, then I will ask you this question, Are you a servant of Jesus Christ, apart from everything, and every human interest, and every human sect and party? What have you ever done for Jesus Christ alone? This is the question.

I was struck with a remark from a Christian lately. Speaking of a gentleman — I trust a Christian too — who gives large sums of money for sectarian uses, my friend, who know him well, said, I never knew him give one shilling to Christ; or, strictly speaking, for the service of Jesus Christ alone. You may build a church, or a chapel; give largely to this interest or that; and you may never have given a cup of cold water to a disciple solely because he belongs to Christ. Is there any wonder then, since this book is a revelation of Jesus Christ to His servants — and we are, all seeking our own instead of the things of Jesus Christ

— I say, can there be any wonder that this blessed book should be so little understood?

Then there is another thing of very great moment. In looking at a picture is it not important to get the right standpoint? Now what was the standpoint of the beloved John, when God gave this revelation of Jesus Christ to him? Are we companions of this servant John, “who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ?” This servant “in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Just in proportion as we are companions with this servant John, for the word of God — not for the theories of men, but the testimony of Jesus Christ — in that same proportion we must be shut out with him at Patmos. Is this our standpoint? Is our platform the Patmos platform? Do you say, I do not understand the Revelation a bit? The reason may be simply this — you live too far from Patmos. It can only be understood by the servants of Jesus Christ who live at Patmos. Are you living in that Babel world, from which the testimony of Jesus Christ must separate? Then is there any wonder that your eyesight is too dim to see the revelation of Jesus Christ?

It must follow that since the great bulk of Christians in our day live in the world, and are one with it in spirit, this book must remain to them, as they say, a sealed book. Oh how sad! A young Oxford man said to me a few days ago, I always lay aside the book of Revelation as a book not to be understood. Think of this, always laying aside the Revelation of Jesus Christ!

Then, this servant John was not only shut out of man’s world, at Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ; but he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” Now this again is all important. The human mind, however cultivated, is utterly incapable of seeing or understanding the person of Jesus Christ. The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. Without the Holy Spirit man never could, or can, see Jesus, and thus know the Father. My reader, let us ponder this well: it is only as you, and I, are in the Spirit, that we shall understand this blessed Revelation. Now may the Holy Ghost open your ears to hear, and give you eyes to see, this revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Lord’s command to His servant John in chapter 1:19, is of great value, as it enables us to understand the proper division of this book. “Write the things which thou hast seen.” This is the first part: the things which he had seen — Jesus as Judge in the midst of the seven candlesticks, which are the seven churches.

“And the things that are.” This we shall find will occupy chapters 2 and 3. The things that are during the whole history of the present period of the Church.

“And the things which shall be after, or after these.” The things that shall take place after the close of Christianity, or the period of the Church, “the things that are.” This will occupy us from chapter 4 to the end of the book. The things that are about to take place in heaven, and on earth, after the close of Christianity.

Do not hasten over this verse 19, for a clear understanding of these three divisions of the book will greatly help you in the study of all that follows. It is the Lord that thus divides the book.

THE THINGS WHICH JOHN SAW.

“Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.” What wondrous titles! “Faithful witness:” witness of God for us; yet witness of the wrath of God against all sin: witness of God justifying us, in perfect righteousness: as the risen Son of God He takes His place, and title, “the first begotten from among the dead.”

“Behold, he cometh with clouds:” the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.” What themes for holy contemplation! Long might we linger; and often may we, with adoring worship, thus contemplate this revelation of Jesus Christ.

Hearken! John first hears a voice, and that not a whisper, but a great voice as of a trumpet. It is the Lord announcing Himself as “the first and last.” Do we thus own Jesus the eternal God? He commands him to write what he sees, and send it to the seven churches of Asia. When John turned to see the voice that spoke, he saw a remarkable sight — “Seven golden candlesticks,” and one like unto the Son of man in the midst of them. Have you ever seen Jesus, the true centre of the Church of God in its completeness? What is your centre? is it Jesus?

If we look awhile at the Lord as thus revealed, we shall observe He is not now before us so much as a Saviour, but as a Judge. But how can we look at Him in this character if we have not first known Him as the one who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood? And if washed from our sins, are we able to bear the eyes as a flame of fire, from which nothing can be hid? The servant John said, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” Yes, he needed to hear those words of comfort — words which took him back to the day of His resurrection — “Fear not ; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead.”

Look at this revelation of Jesus; look at Him as “the Ancient of days” of Daniel, clothed with judicial robes: girt with divine righteousness: nothing hid from His eyes: His own walk brightest holiness: a voice that shall be heard: the right of administration in His own hands: power to execute judgment: His countenance of majesty, supremacy, and strength. This is the one to whom I now introduce

you, my reader. Look at Him, and remember it is not of prophecy I now write, but to see, and hear, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

THE THINGS THAT ARE.

Before we go on to the addresses to the seven assemblies of Asia, it will be profitable to consider verse 20: "The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest, in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches." We must go to the scriptures of truth for the Holy Spirit's meaning of these symbols; not to the opinions or practices of men. Is not the scriptural meaning of the symbol, a star, or stars, very plain in Daniel 12:3? "They that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." In this period then the seven stars would be all such as the Lord thus used in turning many to righteousness. John in his time saw these in their completeness, in the right hand of Christ the Lord. Have you thought of this? Have you seen the administration of all the gifts, at the commencement of the history of the Church, in the right hand of Christ? Concerning these gifts or stars, we read that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." "And there are differences of administrations [or ministries], but the same Lord."

This subject is fully stated in 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14. We have the same primitive fact clearly stated in Ephesians 4: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." These are the stars: and when we think of what has taken place since as to ministry, we may say truly, What a mystery! Do you now see this revelation of Jesus Christ, holding in His right hand the seven stars: the risen and glorified Lord exercising the complete administration of the Church?

Well, now there is another term used: the seven stars are the angels of the seven assemblies. What does this term "angel" mean? I know there is a common thought that this means a clergyman. But then at that time there were no clergymen. In the New Testament there is no person that answers in the least degree to a modern clergyman. There were apostles, evangelists, teachers, pastors, and elders; but no such person as a clergyman. There is not the most distant reference to a district of the world being called a parish; and a person ordained over that parish. Perhaps you say, the term angel of the Church may mean a dissenting minister, or a minister ordained over a congregation or church. But the same objection meets its as before. We find no such character in the New Testament times. Not in one single instance was there such a minister ordained over a church. Elders were ordained by apostles or their delegates; these were the recognized gifts of Christ; and those whom the Holy Ghost had

made overseers, to feed the flock, the Church of God. Surely departure from this would be sin. I do not discuss the practices of men; I only state well known facts, seen and proved in the holy scriptures; as it is only from scripture we can understand these symbols or words.

The scriptures use the word “angel” in the sense of a representative. It was so used when Peter stood knocking at the gate; they said, “It is his angel.” So the Lord uses it when speaking of little ones: He says, “their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” In this sense we shall find the Lord addressing that, or those, who represent the Church during its entire history; and we shall find it a term of great force and meaning.

And now as to the symbol of “the seven golden candlesticks.” If we turn to the pattern of heavenly things, we find the beautiful golden candlestick, with its centre shaft, and six branches, and its seven lamps, “was one beaten work of pure gold” — made from one talent of pure gold. Now was not this very fine, as a figure of Christ and the Church, all of one; both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified? The veil was on the face of Moses; and that candlestick which was in the tabernacle was still hid from the sight of men: its light never shone into the world. But now the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. O what ought the Church to be! “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” As each branch was of the same piece of pure gold — as each lamp was supplied with the same pure oil — so is the Church one with Christ, and the one Spirit dwells in each member of His body. What a witness for God should the Church as a candlestick be! All this is about to be judged, tested, by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2.

ADDRESSES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

No doubt these seven churches then existed, and the revelation of Jesus Christ was literally to each of them. But as God gave this revelation to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and as these seven addresses take up the whole period of the things that are: we shall find them to contain a distinct revelation of Jesus Christ to the seven successive stages of the Church's history as a whole, from its beginning to its end. For, as the states of these churches are so entirely different, they could not as a whole be applicable to the whole state of the Church at one time. With one it is a time of fierce persecution; with another a time of luxury and self-indulgence; so that both these could not be true of the whole Church at one time.

I will give you a very simple illustration, which has been helpful to many in understanding the purpose of these seven addresses. I was looking down the deep shaft of a coal mine, and noticing the rapid motion of the rope, but I could not tell whether the motion was upwards, or downwards. The proprietor of the mine invited me up into the engine-room. There I found two immense engines with a huge drum, around which was coiled the rope hundreds of yards in length. Attached to this drum was a clock-work contrivance, with a dial like a clock face. The fingers marked the exact depth the cage had descended by the rope: so that the moment the cage reached the bottom, the steam was turned off by the man in charge. I also noticed that when one cage reached the bottom, at that very moment another cage came out into the full light of day at the top. I was remarkably struck with this arrangement: it was so different from straining my eyes in the dark shaft. Now whilst reading the revelation of Jesus Christ in Paris, I saw how strikingly the pit dial-plate illustrates these seven addresses. If we look at Christendom, human reason may fail to see whether it is going down or up. One may think he sees progress and improvement; another may say he sees declension and apostasy: motion there is, anyhow. But when I look at these addresses, I find they contain as it were God's dial-plate, divided into seven periods or stages of the history of Christendom: and here we have not to strain our short-sighted reason, but we have the very judgments of Christ on all that has and will take place.

EPHESUS.

Ephesus is the first hour or stage of the Church's history. It is the Lord that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand. We see Him walking in the midst of the churches, clothed in His judicial robes, as we have seen before. As a king holdeth the sceptre in his right hand, so the Lord exercised His divine title of administration in the first stage of the Church's history. For a pope, a conference, the world's parliament, or a majority, to be exercising their

authority, in those days, was simply impossible. The Lord of glory ascended up on high; He held the stars in His right hand; and He must be set aside before any of these could take the administration of the stars, or servants of Christ. I love to dwell on that scene; and from my inmost soul I say, Thou, thou art worthy, holy Lord, and thou alone! Concerning spiritual gifts, I own thee, Jesus, Lord.

Alas, as we follow the history of Christendom, never again do we find the stars in the hands of Christ. Never again does the Church as a whole own the administration of her Lord as at the beginning. This is sad.

Now will you hear what Jesus says to the Church in its first stage of decline? He judges: we hear. "I know thy works." This is not a question of salvation, but the judgment of the Lord as to works and ways. "And thy labour and thy patience." If you compare this with 1 Thessalonians 1:3 you will find that a good deal of freshness was gone. There it was "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." But still, what the Lord finds He commends. Is not that just like Him? And He commends all He can first. They could not bear them which were evil: they tried, and resisted, the beginning of that false apostolic succession. They found them liars — no doubt this gave them much sorrow and trial. But they bore up with patience; as He says, "for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." All this was very dear to the Lord. What a revelation this is! for we thus get to know what is pleasing to our dear Lord.

Then follows the first mark of declension: "Nevertheless I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Then warnings and threatenings; but mingled with what He could approve: hatred to the deeds of the Nicolaitanes — practisers of sin.

And then, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Men would alter or add to this; they would say, You must hear what the Church says. The question is, Shall we hear God, or man?

SMYRNA.

We now come to the second period of the Church's history.

The Lord again addresses that which represents the Church: "Unto the angel of the church at Smyrna." This period is marked as a time of persecution. We know that such was the case. The blood of the saints was spilt like water — a time of sore tribulation for the true servant of Jesus Christ. He therefore is in this revelation "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." In each case the revelation of Jesus is most suited to the state of the Church at that period. The blessed link with Him that was dead and is alive takes away the fear of death. At this period there was a desperate effort of Satan to introduce ritualism: a return

to beggarly ordinances. We have the thoughts of Christ as to such efforts: “I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but the synagogue of Satan.” Surely it is important that the servant of Jesus Christ should mark this. And there is an important word from Him here: the persecuted Church, or that which represented it, was in deep poverty; “but thou art rich,” says the Lord. There was peculiar honour in being thus near and like Himself, who had not where to lay His head. I have learnt this, Jesus is specially the partner of His poor servants. And then the promise is so sweetly adapted to this time of suffering and death: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

PERGAMOS.

We now arrive at the third period of the Church’s history. What a change! The Lord is now revealed as “he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” Does not this imply marked need of judgment? Let the servants know what their Lord condemns, and what He approves. We find Satan’s seat here, in this third period of the Church’s history. One thing is very much approved by the Lord Jesus: He says to the representative of the Church of this period, “Thou holdest fast my name.” Is it nothing to us to see what the Lord thus approves of? Are we holding fast His name? I know this is nothing in the sight of men: as they say, What’s in a name? “And hast not denied my faith.” Thus the Lord again approves what He can first.

“But I have a few things against thee: thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.” The Church is still regarded in its outward unity. There were two parties in it most hateful to Christ: those who held the doctrine of Balaam, and those who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes — the doctrine of the Balaamites, and the doctrine that those who professed faith in Christ might practise sin. Now surely it was in this third period of the history of Christendom — say from about the period of Constantine — that the clergy began to imitate the practices of Balaam. Not merely preaching for hire; but, just as he advised the mingling of the Jews with idolatry, so the clergy advised the mingling of the Church with the idolatrous temple worship of the world. I have read how great divines approved of this: I hear how solemnly the Lord condemns it. Idol temples were now called churches; shameful idol feasts were turned into shameful christian festivals: the gods of the heathen were turned into saints; and these old demons were still worshipped under new names! Tell me of one so-called christian festival that was not thus linked with the worship of demons. Call you find one of these saints’ days in the New Testament? which of them did the apostles observe? Was not the attempt denounced by the Holy Ghost? See Galatians 4; 10, 11.

And then as to practising sin: this became most sad. The clergy lived in open sin, kept concubines. The world was called the Church, but remained the world still.

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly.” And then notice the change in the persons: “and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” In the midst of the dreadful corruption that had now come in there was still the angel of the Church; that which represented it. And very precious is the promise to the overcomer at that time: “To eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it:” sweet communion; enduring purity.

THYATIRA.

We now come to the fourth period of the Church’s history. That this marks the dark middle ages of Popery we cannot mistake. There was that which represented the Church, and to it the Lord speaks. Here He is revealed — mark it well — as “the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass.” Before one reproof, even as to wicked Jezebel, He again approves of all He can. In those dark days there was not a heart true to Him, or all act done to Him, that His eye did not behold. “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.” Now is not this very touching? so encouraging to any obscure servant of Christ at such a time!

“Notwithstanding I have against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,” &c. The words “a few things” should be omitted. Surely it is the strongest possible disapproval of the allowance of the pretences and the wickedness of this woman. Now did not the church of Rome become this woman? Read carefully the history of Jezebel, the upholder of idolatry; the murderess of the servants of the Lord; the wicked counsellor. Could there have been a more striking picture of Rome than that woman? She carried out to the full the wicked principles of Balaam. It is written of Ahab that he sinned so that “there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” Whilst professing to be the bride of Christ, she, the Church so called, has been married to the world; and has stirred up more wickedness than can be found in any other history. Such is Rome — the wicked Jezebel — as condemned by the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And I gave her space to repent.” Oh which is most marvellous, this huge system of wickedness, or the grace that has borne with it for a thousand years? “And she will not repent.” I believe this is the correct rendering. Solemn word of the Lord! He says Rome will not repent. Jezebel’s pretension to infallibility makes it, so to speak, impossible for her to repent. “She will not repent.” And since she will not repent, it follows that all her guilt — her murders and

iniquities — are upon her, and remain upon her until the day of her terrific destruction. Suppose a person commits a sin, and refuses to repent of that sin, is he not as guilty forty years hence as the day when he sinned? So is it with Rome. Like Jezebel of old, she has stirred up the civil powers to deeds of wickedness, of robbery, of murder, such as have no parallel. And before the Son of God, she stands, as wicked, as guilty, as if she had committed all this iniquity this very day. Oh! think of this, you who are converts to Rome; converts of Jezebel; you deliberately accept her deep-stained guilt. And she will not repent; she will not acknowledge her sins; she will not abhor herself. She is drunk with her intoxicating wickedness. And who cannot see that England is returning to her horrible vomit again? The moment you join Jezebel — Rome — that moment you are — guilty, with her, of all her unrepented murders. If I ask, Lord, what is thy judgment of Rome? He answers, She is Jezebel; and Jezebel's doom awaits her.

We must distinguish between the “angel” and “her”. The threatenings are to her. The Lord deeply censures the angel for suffering her; but the threatening is to her, and to her children. And then, for the first time, a distinct remnant is recognized by the Lord. The words “and unto” in verse 24 should be omitted. It is another party, a remnant. “And unto you I say, the rest [or remnant] in Thyatira.” And how truly this was fulfilled! In the dark days of Jezebel, the Lord had His remnant — often persecuted to death by Rome. These might not have had much truth; but Jesus says, “that which ye have, hold fast till I come.” And now this remnant is recognized, there is a marked change. Before the Lord names this remnant, from wicked Jezebel, Rome whilst the Church was regarded in its outward unity, the whole Church was addressed: “He that hath an ear let him hear:” but in the last four stages of the Church's history, after the remnant is seen and owned of the Lord, it is first “he that overcometh,” and then, as it were, out of these overcomers, “he that hath an ear.”

Before I leave this fourth stage or condition of the Church's history, I would recall the revelation of Jesus to this state, as “the Son of God.” Every false doctrine of Rome is a masked attack on the Son of God. If we own Jesus to be the Son of God — God manifest in the flesh, the infinite God — then His sacrifice must be infinite also: and if infinite, it must cover the finite sinner. As taught by the Holy Ghost in Hebrews 10, such a sacrifice must for ever perfect. That one infinite sacrifice, once offered, needs no other sacrifice, or it is not infinite. And to add another sacrifice is surely to deny that it is infinite. I have often given this illustration: suppose I speak of an infinite line, passing through space, and some one says, You must add one inch to that line, would not this be a denial that the line was infinite? Then it follows that every time a pretended sacrifice in the Mass is offered, it is a masked but distinct denial that the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ is infinite in value. And if the sacrifice is not infinite, then the person offered is not infinite. And thus the Mass is a denial

that Jesus is the Son of God: neither can that sacrifice be continued, or prolonged, in the Mass; for after He had offered one sacrifice for ever He sat down. To prolong the sacrifice is to deny that the Son of God finished the work which the Father gave Him to do.

And again; the exaltation of a creature, say Mary the blessed mother of Jesus after the flesh, to the place of equal worship with the Son of God, is only another way of reducing the infinite God to the level of a creature, or the denial that Jesus is the Son of God. I forbear to say more; but Jesus as the Son of God tests everything of Thyatira, or the fourth stage of the Church on earth. May it test our hearts! What think ye of Christ? Is He the Son of God? “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Has His one sacrifice, like Himself infinite, for ever perfected you before God? What a test! Do you want anything in addition to Christ?

CHAPTER 3

SARDIS.

We now pass on to the fifth state of the Church, and we enter upon a very solemn revelation of Jesus Christ: the very revelation of Jesus to those protestant times which succeeded the dark days of Romanism, or Thyatira. In other words, we come to the judgment of the Lord Jesus on the things around us: still addressing that which represents the Church, the angel. At this stage the Lord presents Himself as “he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.” What a depth of meaning in this! Oh that Christians in the protestant period had known and owned this! In the primitive Church, the Lord held the stars in His own right hand, as we have seen: He exercised the administration. The Church owned His authority; the Spirit using the gifts, or stars, as He would.

In the Church, or assembly, there was divine liberty in the Spirit for ministry. (1 Cor. 12, 14.) The servants of the Lord might speak, two or three; the rest judge. One man ordained over a church was then a thing unknown. During the days of popery, the so-called church took the stars, or the administration of spiritual gifts, out of the hands of Christ, and assumed to rule, or administer authority over the world. Its princes were expected to do obedience to the pope; and they were cursed if they refused.

And what have we in protestantism? Though the Lord presents Himself as having the authority, and all fulness of the Spirit’s power, “he that hath,” did the protestant churches recognize His all-sufficiency? Sad, oh sad, to have to confess it! they have placed the stars in the hands of the world; and have not only linked themselves with the world, but have requested the princes or governments of the world to exercise the administration of the Church. Yes, they have done this, until the very world is saying, We have had enough of it.

Thus in the primitive Church we see Christ governing the Church. In popery we see the Church assuming to govern the world. In protestantism we see the world governing the Church. These are the three principles of Ephesus, Thyatira, and Sardis. And the revelation of the Lord Jesus to each is adapted to their respective states.

It is true we find in protestantism other forms of church government, separate from the state. It may be a synod, or a conference, or the worldly principle of a majority; but all these agree in one thing; they utterly ignore the Ephesian state — the owning the authority of Christ as Lord in the administration of the gifts. None of these regard the commands of Christ, as to church government and ministry in 1 Corinthians 12-14. And if any Christian were to obey Christ as Lord in those portions of the word, it would be to them the greatest disorder. Oh let us own with shame how we have failed to recognize the seven stars in the

hands of Christ. There is the same fulness in Him, to meet the need of His saints, that there was during the first days of the Church. But we have failed to own and trust Him. Failure to do this has been the great mistake of protestantism, and the greatest loss the Church has sustained in these days. What is the best religiously educated man you can have over a church, compared to those whom the Lord would find, and the Holy Ghost would use? But the loss is scarcely felt, because not known.

Can there be any doubt that the protestant state has succeeded the fourth or Romish state of the Church? I suppose none can question it. Then let us in this address to Sardis, the fourth state, hear the very words of Christ about protestant churches. We look at protestantism, with its unspeakable privileges — the scriptures of truth in its hands, and the great truth of justification by faith having been proclaimed — and what saith the Lord? “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” Oh what sentence on the churches and chapels of our days! Lord, thou sayest it: it is true; and we own it in the dust.

“I have not found thy works perfect before God.” How much will be found to be wood, hay, and stubble! No one can deny there are works in abundance done by protestants; but are they done to or before God? Whatever men may think, and however they may applaud one another, Jesus says, “I have not found thy works perfect before God.” We may do a good work for ourselves, or to men, or to be seen of men; but we ought to yield ourselves to God. The sentence is just: He says it. Let us accept it with unfeigned humiliation.

The Lord, do you hear, commends the works done by His people in popery, Thyatira, more than the works done by His people amongst protestants, Sardis: but this difference I note; whilst He says wicked Jezebel will not repent, He commands the protestants to repent. This is encouraging — yet, if not, the same threatening is used against the protestant churches here as is uttered against the world in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4: “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.” And is this the terrible doom of the world, the doom of the protestant churches? What is the Lord’s reply? “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.” Oh think of this, a few names in protestantism. Is not this enough to wake the sleeping multitude of professors? Will you notice, it is not the professor, but the overcomer, who shall be clothed in white raiment, and whose name shall not be blotted out: which are you, my reader? Oh will it not be terrible for the multitude, who have a name to live, but are dead, and who will shortly be blotted out? Now is it not wonderful that we have the very Judgment of our Lord on protestantism, so solemn; and yet many shut up this book as not to be understood? Perhaps its searching truths are not liked. Let us not suppose this is the Lord’s judgment on His honoured servants the Reformers: but it is on protestantism, as a result in the world.

PHILADELPHIA.

This is the sixth stage of the Church's history. Again that which represents the Church is addressed: "Unto the angel of the church in Philadelphia write." It is now not what the Lord does, but what He is: "He that is holy, be that is true." Then what he hath: "the key of David." Then what he doeth: "he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Let us thus see our blessed Lord, revealed for this period of the Church's history. And let us remember, that God has given us the special revelation of Jesus expressly adapted to each successive stage of "the things that are."

It will at once be seen how deeply important this revelation to the Philadelphian state is, when we remember that it is only within the last fifty years the Holy Ghost has been gathering believers to the Lord Jesus because of what HE IS: the holy and the true. After the general corruption of the outward body of Christendom in Jezebel, popery, we have seen a state of protestantism exactly answering to Sardis. And since then the Spirit of God has certainly gathered a feeble remnant of believers from all the dead protestant bodies, and out of corrupt Rome too. And nothing could be more striking than the answer of this last work of the Spirit, to the features of this sixth state of the present period of the Church.

Well do I remember the exceeding goodness of God in leading me, many years ago, to know the blessed reality of what I now write. I had in some measure felt the sinfulness of sectarianism. I knew a great deal about what was wrong, but really had no knowledge of what was right. In this state I was led to witness a few Christians met together in the name of the Lord Jesus, to break bread, on the first day of the week; and against whom I had, in my ignorance, felt bitterly opposed. I entered the room where they had just assembled, and were in solemn silence, waiting on God in worship. Naturally I looked for the pulpit, and the man of the pulpit. There was no pulpit, and no pulpit man. I then looked for the president. There was no president to be seen. Never shall I forget the deep solemnity that fell on my soul, when I felt these people were gathered in reality to meet the Lord Himself. Never before had I thus felt the presence of God. The Holy Ghost had not gathered them to peculiar doctrines, or to some man; but to Jesus, the holy and the true; realizing the all-sufficiency of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and to shew them to them. It is impossible to express in words the unspeakable reality of this rest of the soul in the presence of God. Let not my reader suppose that those whom the Lord has thus blessed think themselves better than others. Where all is known to be grace, the thought of betterness is an absurdity.

Ah, since then, what grace to me, and what cause for self-abhorrence! Yes, depths of mercy only known to God. But never once has there a doubt crossed

my mind that this is the present most sure work of God. Never have I heard a sentence or read a line that has shaken my confidence. False brethren have crept in, and have gone out: they have said and written bitter things; for which my heart has grieved. This work has been hated and attacked by the whole of professing Christendom; it has only the more convinced me that the work is of God. Yes, as Jesus said to the Jews of old, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, AND YE WOULD NOT;” so these words may now be surely applied to many who are even saved by His precious blood.

But I must go on. To the feeble flock, thus gathered to Jesus because of what He is, the holy and the true, the Spirit has also led them to look for Him, and to know that the government shall be laid upon His shoulder. In the midst of this world’s gross darkness, wars, and tumult, the coming reign of Christ is a bright fact. The Holy Ghost has unlocked the scriptures to their souls.

And is it not a fact, that in the former history of the suffering servants of Christ, the door has soon been shut, and the devoted servant of the Lord persecuted to the bitter death; but now “he openeth, and no man shutteth.” From the palace to the cottage, the Lord has opened a wide door; and though the truth was never more hated, yet no man can shut the door. At this moment I have letters before me from devoted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, labouring in many nations, in much poverty and trial, unknown to the world — but what a wide door is open everywhere! He openeth, and no man shutteth, not even the pope; for some of these letters are from Italy. Go on, beloved brethren, in the name of the holy One and the true. He says, “I know thy works,” however unknown and despised: “behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.”

O, it is so sweet and real to get back in spirit to the person of the Lord, and to His administration! I cannot help dwelling a little on this. How often have I proved this: as a dear departed brother once said to me, “One direct answer to prayer has settled my soul, as to the Lord, even as to His existence, more than all the reasoning and reading of my whole life.” I do want us, my reader, to have more of this direct dealing with Jesus as Lord. I will give you one or two instances, out of many, during the Lord’s dealings for thirty years.

I was at a meeting for prayer in Hull, one Saturday forenoon. The Lord said to me in the Spirit, “You must go to Scarborough to preach the gospel to-morrow.” I knew His voice: but, lest I should be mistaken, I went to my room, and looked to Him in prayer; and then I became assured it was the Lord. I immediately left for Scarborough. I had never been there before, and I knew the name of only one person there, but had not seen him. I travelled with a young man going home to die. The Lord blessed His word to this young man, and his mother pressed me to make her house my home during my stay. I said I could not accept her kind

offer, as I had just made a request to the Lord — it was this: I had been telling the Lord I knew no one in Scarborough, and the name of only one christian man. And I had said, “Lord, bring him on the platform and shew me him.” The train stopped, a man looked into my carriage, and straight at me; and the Lord said to me “That is the man.” I hesitated, he walked to one gate, and I to the other. I thought, How foolish this is: the Lord assuredly answers prayer. He came toward me, and I met him. I said, “May I ask, is your name Mr. L.?” “ He replied, Yes, it is; is your name C. S., of S.?” I said, “Yes, it is; but how do you know my name?” “Well, he said, I came to meet Mr. Y., of Hereford, who is expected to preach Christ here to-morrow; and there will be a large company to hear him. This is the last train. [There was no train on Lord’s-day morning then.] I was on the platform, and Mr. Y. has not come, and it was just as though a voice had said, ‘That is C. S., of S., I have sent him,’ and that caused me to look so earnestly at you.” On the following day I found the truth of those words, “I have set before thee an open door.”

One more instance: some years ago the Lord brought before me a town between Derby and Stone. I think this was on a Monday; and He told me I was to go and preach the gospel there. I did not know the name of the town, but had passed it once on the rail. I waited on the Lord in prayer. I named the matter to a christian brother, from Staffordshire; he knew the town, and told me it was Uttoxeter. I still waited on the Lord for the time to go; a letter arrived on Friday; I think, it was from a lady in Tenbigh, South Wales, enclosing another from a Christian in Uttoxeter, asking this lady, if she knew the address of C. S., to forward the enclosed, begging that I would go at once and preach the gospel at Uttoxeter. And the Lord, who had prepared hearts, proved again that He openeth and no man shutteth. From that day a few have met to own the Lord Jesus, the holy and the true.

I could fill a volume with such instances, and could many a servant of the Lord Jesus. But I merely give these to illustrate what I mean by having to do directly with the Lord Himself.

Another mark of this sixth stage of the Church’s history is this: “For thou hast a little strength.” This so marks the present work of God as to all outward appearance, that compared with human boasting it is only a subject of ridicule. Nothing in the eyes of men at this day is so feeble as that which is really of God. Boasting marks that which is of man; feebleness and utter absence of reputation marks that which is of God. And did not this mark the path of the holy One? What do you think of this revelation of Jesus Christ? In the light of His presence look abroad, and then can you say, I now see what is of God, and I now know what is of men. Lord, grant that the reader from this day may be satisfied with nothing but that which is of thyself.

“And hast kept my word.” Oh, blessed be the Lord! He has fulfilled this also. The remnant which He has gathered, have been drawn from theology and human teaching, to the word; to the very testimony of the Lord Jesus. Those who hate this remnant, and this work of God, as I once did, must own how precious the scriptures are to this feeble remnant.

“And hast not denied my name.” Is not this also a distinct mark of God’s remnant in this day? The moment you own the name of Jesus alone, you are at once reproached with a term that implies you belong to that despised feeble remnant. Do you say, Oh what is there in a name? Do not you forget who it is that says “And hast not denied MY NAME?” Oh, is there any name given among men so sweet as the name of Jesus? If you bear the name of any man or sect, He regards it as “denying my name.” Do you ask, Why will you not bear any other name, or belong to some sect? I reply, It is not of faith, it is not of God. I should grieve my Lord if I denied His name. Can you say, By the grace of God, from this hour I desire to have done with everything that is not of Himself? Then I will say, Amen.

What is this that the Lord Jesus now so strongly condemns? “Them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie.” If you know the scriptures well you will remember that the great effort of Satan was, by his ministers, to introduce ritualism into the primitive Church. Paul and Barnabas went up to the Church at Jerusalem about this matter. See, Acts 15. And though Peter on that occasion strongly rebuked these false teachers, yet he himself was on another occasion greatly to blame about this very matter, as the apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 2:11: He says, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” Peter was afraid of the Ritualists. The point was this, and which had been settled at Jerusalem: That there was no difference between the believing Jews who observed the ritual of the law, and the Gentiles who did not. Both were alike saved by Christ. Satan’s ministers, and perhaps Christians, said, No; those Gentiles who do not observe the ritual are, though saved by Christ, still unholy, and not fit to eat with us. When these teachers came to Antioch Peter also refused to eat with believers of the Gentiles. And many were led astray by his dissimulation. Now this, as the apostle shews, made Christ a minister of sin: “If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.” If those who are justified by Christ are still sinners, unfit for the ritualist Jew to eat with, then this would make Christ a minister of sin, and would plainly exalt the ritual of the law above Christ, and the ritual would make a man more holy than Christ makes him. This is true of the law morally as of the ritual. Now do you not see why Paul, or rather the Spirit of God through Paul, so sternly rebukes the Galatians on the folly of going back to the law? The whole subject is fully discussed. To go back to such beggarly elements, to observe days and months, &c., was to make the apostle afraid of them. This dreadful leaven was also being introduced

at Colosse; and the apostle asks, How can we, being dead with Christ, be subject to ritualism? See Colossians 2:10-23. Ritualism exalts man in the flesh: to be dead with Christ, or to be a Christian, condemns man in the flesh. If you are justified from your sins by the blood of Jesus, and justified from sin by being dead with Him; and completely justified in Christ risen — “He was raised again for our justification” — I say, if after all this, you are a sinner, and must needs go to the law, or to its ritual, or to any other ritual, then plainly Christ died in vain. Now do you wonder that the Lord Jesus should treat this as a very solemn question?

And how remarkable that during this sixth stage of the Church’s history these two things should have run on together: namely, the Holy Spirit gathering souls to Jesus, the holy and the true, leading them to value more and more His word, and opening that word with divine power, and, at the same time, Satan has made the most determined effort to leaven Protestant Christendom with ritualism. Is it a light matter that he is fast turning the protestant establishments into “the synagogue of Satan?” The truth and testimony of the gospel of God has been proclaimed as it never was before since the days of the apostles; and men hate the truth, and the free pure grace of God, and say they are Jews, and are not. Sabbaths and saints’ days; the blasphemy of that Mass, which is the direct denial that the one offering of Jesus on the cross for ever perfects; and the putting of souls under the bondage of the law; this is the boasted restoration of the ministers of Satan. Lord Jesus, I believe thy word; they are the synagogue of Satan. It is not a little remarkable that the Lord’s people, who have been deceived by Satan amongst the ritualists, are beginning to read the tracts written by the servants of the Lord, and to own it is the voice of the Lord. How valuable is the revelation of Jesus Christ on the ritualism of this sixth stage of church history! And this is what He calls it, The synagogue of Satan.

And now He gives a peculiar promise, “Because thou hast kept the words of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Have you thought of the patience of Christ, waiting in heaven for that moment when He shall arise, and with the assembling shout, call up His redeemed saints from the earth to meet Him in the air? The joy set before Him! If you keep this word of His patience, bearing as He does with this wicked rejecting world, it will also separate you from the world; how can you mix with the politics of a world which reject your coming Lord?

Now one of the first throes of this poor world’s trouble, during the Philadelphian stage, has come in a very significant manner. When they were saying Peace and safety, sudden destruction came. May not this be a warning of that coming day of this poor world’s sudden destruction? The wars of the first French empire were before the Philadelphian state of Christendom, or the present work of the

Holy Ghost: but that terrible scene which came so suddenly on France in 1870, 1871 was a sort of sample or first fruit of that coming storm of woe and hour of temptation which shall come on all the world. And from which the Church shall be taken and kept above. England may have been spared a little while, because the Lord has many of His redeemed ones in it. The world prepares for its own mutual destruction; but before it comes we shall be with the Lord. Will you notice what the Lord reveals in close connection with this promise? He gives another promise, and for the first time with the adverb quickly. Now if this terrible scene of human trouble and destruction be a drop that coming storm, then how marked the promise “BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY.” And this is what the Lord Jesus says at this time. May we hear His voice! Can you say, Lord Jesus, come?

If you have the present testimony of your Lord, then “hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Do you understand the Lord here?

Now I want you to notice one sweet little word to the overcomer in verse 12. It is the Lord’s little word “my.” Nothing could be more precious. It is as though He had said, I know what is mine will be dear to you. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.” I was told the other day of a dear old saint: just as she departed she said, “He is mine and I am His.” She had learnt the sweetness of the Lord’s little word “my.”

LAODICEA.

And now we come to the last closing scene, the seventh stage of the history of Christendom. The Lord again addresses that which represents the Church, even in its last state: “Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans.” You will notice that the last four states run on to the end, that is, to the coming of the Lord. And as Thyatira, or Romanism, goes on in her unrepentant state, this state, described in the address to the angel at Laodicea, shews the final result of what takes place in protestant countries. Those who know what the special teaching of the Holy Ghost has been during the last fifteen years must be struck with the revelation of Jesus Christ to this last state of the Church. “These things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” It is in these characters that He has been specially made known by the Holy Ghost; together with a deep sense of the utter failure of the creature, of man in the flesh, however tried; and an enlarged apprehension of Jesus, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father — the believer’s subsisting righteousness before God; yea, the righteousness of God established by Jesus, THE AMEN, the faithful witness of God. The minds of these saints have been directed to the risen Jesus,

the beginning of the creation of God, and have learnt, through the Spirit's teaching, that all is secured in Him, alive from among the dead. And yet, with this great increase of light and knowledge, and clearness of gospel truth — lost since the very first age of the Church — there has also set in a most serious time of lukewarmness and indifference.

It is true though that there never was such a time of outward religiousness, and such boasting of the protestant sects: If money, ministers, and buildings, and societies, were signs of true christian prosperity, what more is there to be desired? But what says the Lord? "Neither cold nor hot; I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me." All this is most true: it is the revelation of Jesus Christ — all around us judged by Him who cannot make a mistake. Oh is not this very solemn? This boasting Christendom about to be utterly rejected as a witness on earth? At this moment the Lord is outside it, knocking at the door. And even here in the very last state how peculiar the promise! It is not where two or three are gathered in His name only: but "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." There are many towns and villages, even in England, where two or three could not be found gathered in the name of Jesus. How sweet then this promise, "If any man."

This then is the close of the things that are — the complete history of Christendom — the seven successive stages of God's dial-plate. First, declension — Ephesus. Second, period of persecution — Smyrna. Third, mingling of the Church with the idolatrous world — Pergamos. Fourth, popery, or Jezebel, in Thyatira. Fifth, protestantism — Sardis. Sixth, a remnant gathered to the person of Jesus — Philadelphia. Seventh, protestantism in its final deceived boasting state — Laodicea. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ in the midst of the seven states of the Church, and His judgment upon the whole seven. To use the figure of the pit, the cage of Christendom has thus gone lower and lower, until it has in Laodicea reached the bottom. The Spirit of God in these seven stages marks the downward course as distinctly as the dial-finger marked the descent of the cage down the shaft of the pit. But, as I said, there were two cages, and as one descended the other ascended; and as the one touched the bottom, at that moment the other came right out at the top, in the full blaze of day. It is exactly so here — Christendom, as a witness for God on earth, reaches the bottom in Laodicea, and is then cut off as loathsome to Christ. At that moment a door is opened in heaven, and the redeemed are there.

We now pass from the study of the things that are, the whole history of the Church on earth.

CHAPTER 4.

THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE.

I wish to go up to heaven with you, through that opened door. But before we go let us remember that this revelation was a revelation, and not a comment on what had been revealed before. It was, it is, supplementary to what had been revealed to Paul, Peter, &c.; but it is quite new. And being the last revelation given, it supposes the reader well acquainted with all that had been revealed before. And unless you are so, you cannot enter into the blessedness of reading this revelation of Jesus Christ.

Do you notice that there is not one word about the taking of the Church, at the close of the complete history of Christendom, to heaven. This could not be; it would not have been revelation. Do you say, Indeed, how is that? Simply because that rapturous event had been revealed to the apostle Paul. You must understand this, or you cannot go one step farther without all being confusion and mistake. The apostle Paul states that revelation of the Lord to him in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. This is the grand key that unlocks every ward of prophetic scripture: and without it all is confusion in the minds of men. You observe, and do observe closely, that this is not the coming of the Lord Jesus in judgment; but in love to receive his living and sleeping saints, to meet Him in the air. The Lord had revealed this to Paul. But there the revelation stops; and just where it ceases to Paul, there it begins to John. This rapture of the saints takes place betwixt chapters 3 and 4 of the Revelation: and now the Lord reveals to John what will take place when He has thus taken us away from this earth. And thus you see the importance of being well acquainted with the revelations that had been given before — and O, are we thus waiting for the Lord Jesus from heaven, to come and take us to the place prepared? Do we know that Christendom has well-nigh run its course; that at any moment He may come; and surely will come soon? How gracious then of the Lord to give us a still further revelation of what will take place in heaven, and on earth, after we are taken up to be with the Lord.

Now look up. The voice which John had heard at Patmos, as it were of a trumpet talking with him, now says, “Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter,” or after these. Do not forget how the Lord divides this book in chapter 1:19: “The things which thou hast seen;” the Lord Himself in the midst of the churches clothed in judicial robes. “And the things that are:” the history of Christendom in chapters 2 and 3. “And the things that shall be after these;” the things that shall be after Christendom ceases to be a witness, or candlestick on earth. We now enter upon the last of these divisions of the book.

“I will shew thee things which must be after these.” From this point then we never find the Church on earth again.¹

May we now, as John, be immediately in the Spirit; for, whether we look at the things on earth, or in heaven, we can only understand them in the Spirit. This is of great moment; mere human learning is sure to err. Now is it not very gracious of the Lord to give us two chapters in heaven, before He reveals the dreadful things that will take place on earth, after the saints are taken up?

Now we arrive. “And behold, a throne was set in heaven, and... sat on the throne.” Why is the name of the one sitting on the throne omitted? Every word the Spirit omits, as well as every word He uses, is of meaning. This omission is very blessed, especially at the moment of our entrance to those scenes of unclouded joy. If you enter the house of a dear and long intimate friend, you need no introduction. If it be the house of a stranger, his name is announced to you, and your name to him. O, does not this omission say, “no stranger God shall meet us?” There shall be no need of an introduction to our Father’s home. The just One died for the unjust, to bring us to God: and we are there in all the welcome of a Father’s love: welcome as He is welcome, who died to bring us there. There is no mention of that redemption which had brought us there; that had been fully declared in other epistles. But we are seen there according to the infinite value of that one sacrifice that brought us there.

He had said “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” And we see the one sitting upon the throne, to look upon like a jasper stone: symbol of that glory in which the Church is seen in millennial days; “having the glory of God: and her light like unto a stone, most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Chapter 21:11. And what a thought of rest is this revelation of God! “Sat on the throne.” Rest of God; as well as rest of the saints above. God rests in the gathered firstfruits of redeeming, love. Do not suppose that this is the end of all things here below; or looking down, as we should say, of all things there below. No, for “there was a rainbow round about the throne,” reminding us that God’s covenant with the earth will still be kept — blessed token, as we look down on the judgments coming on the world below.

¹ That is, the scriptural idea of the Church. That which began on the day of Pentecost. All believers are not as formerly, merely individual saints, influenced by the Spirit of God; but they are now baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body: the very opposite of a national body. All believers, who have passed from death unto life, now compose the Church of God, according to scripture. All saints from the descent of the Holy Ghost, to the coming of Christ to call them up to meet Him in the air. And that is what I mean when I use the word Church. See Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 10:32 ; 12:12, 13, Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:4; 5:24-33.

“And round about the throne four and twenty seats (or thrones), and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” What a scene of unclouded rest and peace! This is the throne of judgments; for out of it proceed lightnings and thunderings. But the redeemed are not represented as standing before it to be judged for their sins; but seated in heaven’s calm of holy rest. O, happy, happy prospect; brought so near to God! What a blessed revelation, thus to see our happy place when He comes to take us to the place prepared!

Let us dwell a little on this scene of holy rest. We see crowned worshippers. If you turn to 1 Chronicles 24, you find that there were four and twenty courses of priests, as there were twice one hundred and forty-four, or two hundred and twenty-eight Levites of praise in the next chapter. This is used by the Spirit to shew the character and relative position of these twenty-four crowned worshippers; and the one hundred and forty-four thousand of chapters 7 and 14. The priesthood had the nearest place to God — and such is the place of the twenty-four crowned worshippers. I doubt not that these four and twenty, being a complete number, or doubly complete, represent, not only the Church but “all that are his” taken up at His coming. It should be observed, that the Church is not yet seen in heaven in its separateness as the bride of the Lamb. The marriage of the Lamb takes place in a subsequent chapter. Surely the Holy Ghost has a purpose in this. O, what a contrast is this revelation to the dark doctrines of Romish purgatory, and the deep gloom of uncertainty that torments the minds of many out of Rome. Believer, this is the holy scene that awaits us. Look up with joy. The nearest possible place to the throne of God is yours. Holy and intelligent worship is your happy employment. “Not a cloud above, nor a spot within.” When the priests of old entered the sanctuary of the Lord, there was a molten sea, containing water to wash their feet; but in this scene of glory we find a sea of glass before the throne, like unto crystal: solid and transparent. No more defilement to wash away. O, the joy this gives even now — an eternity of purity itself. And, blessed Lord, until we arrive there, never wilt thou fail to wash our feet, to restore our souls.

Now I must ask your closest attention to a revelation that will throw great light on all that follows. “In the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four beasts [or, as it should be, living creatures] full of eyes before and behind.” Here we find the need of knowing the scriptures. In Isaiah 6:1-7, you will find a description of the seraphim, or burners. These have six wings, and they cry, Holy, holy, holy, as the four living creature do in and around the throne. This cry of Holy, holy, holy, gave such a sense of his own vileness to Isaiah as to make him cry out, “Woe is me.” Then flew one of the seraphims, having a live coal in his hand from off the altar: “and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” Thus we see in the seraphim, burning, and purifying — and the sinner purified

by fire from the altar; purified by the burning judgment that consumed the holy One on that altar: or, will you understand this a little better? — purified according to and by the judgment of God fully executed against sin on the cross.

Now turn to Ezekiel. Read chapters 1 and 10. In this vision of the four living creatures you notice that there are the same symbolic heads of creation as in the four living creatures of Revelation. These four living creatures are the cherubim. And mark the action of the cherubim. It was not to take a handful of fire now for purification, but for judgment; that he, now clothed in linen, might scatter it over the city. The cross is the measure of both purification and judgment. Now in the description given of the four living creatures, in our revelation of Jesus Christ, we have the combination of seraphim and cherubim. The Holy, holy, holly, cry of the six-winged seraphim, and the symbol of the four heads of creation as in the cherubim. Verse 7 is cherubim, and verse 8 is seraphim. Surely this sets clearly before us the two great principles of the throne of God in government. Burning purification and consuming judgments. And yet, when we shall thus behold the righteousness of God in unclouded light, the effect will be, not dread, but profound worship.

In this combined action then of the throne of God will take place the judgments that are about to be executed on the earth. God will act according to the cross of Christ, both in purifying and in judgment. Indeed these two principles have marked the action of God. And in tracing scripture, the seraphim is found to precede the cherubim. Even in Eden, before the cherubims and flaming sword are seen, the Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them. Surely this was seraphim: it told out the counsel of God in cleansing and clothing the guilty. In Hebrews 10 these two principles are very clear. First, the seraphim: perfect and everlasting purification by the one offering of the body of Jesus on the altar, never to fail, never to be repeated; and therefore boldness to enter the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. (vers. 1-23.) Then the cherubim: judgment that must fall on all who despise the seraphim purification: as in chapter 12:29, “For our God is a consuming fire.” The cross exalts the righteousness of God above the very heavens, whether in seraphim burning purification, or in cherubim consuming judgment. Blessed for us to know the cherubim looking inwards, on the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. It is not mercy that makes a compromise with sin; but the righteousness of God revealed in the very mercy shown, through the atoning blood of the Lamb. O, how gladly could I linger on this deeply interesting theme of seraphim and cherubim! One more thought — very sweet to me — the seraphim had six wings; the cherubim had four. God is more swift and ready to purge away our sin than to judge. Long has His long-suffering delayed the judgments! But cherubim judgment must come. You say, Well, I only see this dimly at present. True; but O when we arrive in the brightness of His presence; when we know as we are known; when seraphim and cherubim combined give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sits on the throne; then shall we

worship Him that liveth for ever and ever; casting our crowns before the throne, saying, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

CHAPTER 5.

We here still linger in heaven before we see the judgments commence on the earth. A book, or roll of sealed judgments, is seen in the hands of Him who sits on the throne. And a strong angel gives the challenge with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?” No man was found worthy to open the book of judgments and take inheritance. In that scene of unclouded light not one amongst the myriads of the saved will feel worthy to judge another. Do not you think it would be well if we felt a little more of this now?

In a sense we do feel something of this. In cases of discipline, when evil in another has to be judged, there is deep and proper feeling of unworthiness to judge and act. O, who am I, to judge my brother? Now, without care, this feeling of unworthiness to judge another may weaken, if not destroy, proper and holy discipline. There is only one who is worthy and surpassingly beautiful is the way in which even Paul takes shelter beneath the worthiness of his Lord. He does not say, I am more holy; or, You are worthy to judge a fallen brother; but with such holy delicacy he says, “In the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan.” See 1 Corinthians 5:4.

This is the only true principle of holy discipline: the name, the person, the worthiness, and the power, of our Lord Jesus Christ. This produces brokenness of spirit in all, whilst discipline in our own name, or fancied worthiness, would be the very worst form of phariseeism. I believe there is much failure in discipline, for want of seeing this all-important principle.

John seems surprised, and weeps much because no one was found worthy. But now the Lord assumes a new character. Worthy to open the seals of judgment surely He is, the holy one: but He is now the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. You will observe this indicates a change: now that the Church has been taken from the earth, all that follows will have a Jewish bearing. God will not forget one promise to His ancient people.

But if He is now to be the Lion of the tribe of Judah, it is because He is “the Lamb as it had been slain.” John beheld, “And lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures [seraphim and cherubim combined], and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” What a key this is — the slain Lamb in the centre of the judgment throne of God. As witnesses of this we see seraphim and cherubim, and the assembled myriads of the redeemed. This is the key note of the judgments and counsels of God: all must be according to the wrath that was endured by the Lamb of God. He is the centre and the exact expression of the righteous requirements of God. Rejected and hated here below,

but the centre there above. You, my reader, have a centre. Is it self, or the Lamb of God?

Yes, when the Lamb as it had been slain takes the book, then seraphim and cherubim bear witness that He is the worthy One; and the four and twenty, or the redeemed, fall down in worship; “having every one of them harps, and golden bowls full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” Mark, this is before the Lamb. He is the object of heaven’s worship. And the prayers of the saints come up before Him. Who are these saints, if the Church is now completed and seated in glory? If you will look closely, you will find that the new song which the Church sings is not about themselves, but about those saints whose prayers ascend. The best scholars are agreed that this is so; and that verse 10 should read, “and hast made them unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign on the earth.” It is the new song, not only of redemption, but the worthiness of the slain Lamb to take the book. Surely not one amongst the myriads of the redeemed but will own, with untold joy, the worthiness of the Lamb. Yes, this shall be our everlasting theme. But the least attention to this revelation of Jesus will show you that in this song we shall be intensely interested in the saints then on the earth, whose prayers have been presented: that our blessed Jesus is not only worthy of presenting all the redeemed, then gathered around the throne; but also worthy of all that shall be saved out of that scene of the tribulation about to commence: and far beyond that, as we shall know, as this wondrous revelation opens up to us.

Yea, and as we see, the myriads of myriads of angels also become intensely interested in this same wondrous theme. The future opens; and all heaven shouts, “Worthy is the Lamb:” all creation sings His praise: seraphim and cherubim bear witness, and say “Amen;” and the crowned worshippers “fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

Before we enter on the things that are about to take place on the earth, after the close of the history of Christendom, it would be well to take a glance over again, to see clearly the point at which we have arrived.

In chapter 1 we saw the revelation of Jesus Christ, clothed in His judicial robes, walking in the midst of the churches. Then in chapter 2 and 3 we saw the judgment of the Lord Jesus, as to the seven stages of the history of Christendom. That being completed, then we have had the things that will take place in heaven immediately after the Church is taken there. Now we come to the things that will take place on earth after the close of Christendom, and the redeemed are taken to heaven. How very important it is rightly to divide this precious book. If you are washed in the blood of Christ, then be assured that you will be seated in glory around the throne of God, before these judgments, of which this book now speaks, can possibly take place. As the voice said, “Come up hither, and I will

show thee things which must be after these;" that is, after the close of the Church's history on earth, as fully described in the addresses to the seven churches. Therefore, before we go on, let us lift up our hearts to the Lord, to keep us in the Spirit in heaven, whilst we look at the things that are about to take place on the earth. This will really be soon. We shall be there, and then shall take place on earth what is now before us.

CHAPTER 6.

The Lamb opens one of the seals. He who, during, this long gospel day, has been the expression of the grace of God, is now in the very centre of the throne, the unfolders of the judgments; and, as it were, with the voice of thunder, not now the soft sweet whisper of mercy. The four living creatures command the judgments to commence. One says, “Come:” the words “and see” should be omitted. It is not an invitation to John to see; but a command, with thunder, “Come.” Now we shall find that the unfolding of these seals simply reveals to us the exact order of the providential judgments that will take place after the Church is removed.

First. “A white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer.” A crowned warrior makes rapid conquests and distant ones, as the “bow” implies. And being seated on a white horse seems to imply that he makes great pretensions to righteousness.

Second. “And there went out another horse — red; and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” Thus, after the time of rapid conquest, a dreadful state of mutual slaughter. If we have seen lately the horror produced by only two nations at war, what will it be when peace is taken from the earth? And think how all nations are preparing for this!

Third. And now we see “a black horse.” A time of deep mourning and gloom and famine succeeds the time of dreadful slaughter; “a measure of wheat for a penny.” The measure, or choenix, contained about a pint and a half; and the denarius, rendered penny, was a little under our eight pence. But, as it is used by the Lord to express the value of a day’s labour, the famine will be such that it will require a day’s labour, or say three shillings, to buy a pint and a half of wheat; or, in other words, the common necessities of life will be about sixteen times their ordinary value.

Fourth. When the fourth seal is opened, the four sore judgments — the sword, hunger, death, and wild beasts of the earth — fall specially on a fourth part of the earth; that is, the earth as held by the Gentile monarchies. All this will simply take place in the order given by these symbols: providential judgments in an extraordinary degree. But bear in mind that all this is after the close of the history of the Church on earth.

Fifth. When this seal is opened, an entirely new scene is presented. This is not the crowned elders, in glorified bodies; but the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. This slain remnant

cry for vengeance, as the remnant of the Jews cry in the latter-day Psalms. And in this disembodied state they must wait until many shall be killed, as they had been. I grant this was all new to John. It is revelation.

Sixth. At the opening of this seal the whole fabric of society is shaken to pieces. What a picture these symbols present, sudden and unexpected! the sun implying supreme government, and the moon that which should reflect it; stars high and eminent persons. What a scene of darkness and shaking! So terrible that all classes of men become intensely alarmed, and think that the day of the wrath of the Lamb is come. If we compare the opening of this seal with Matthew 24:29, the events symbolized are very similar; only we must note, that this hour of temptation, described in the sixth seal, is before the great tribulation; and in Matthew it is immediately after the tribulation. Thus we see at every step that this book is the revelation of that which had not been made known before. Thus chapter 6 describes the order of events that will take place on earth immediately after the Church is taken up to heaven: a time of rapid conquest, by one pretending to great righteousness. Then a time of general and terrible slaughter. Then blackness of mourning and famine. Then the four sore judgments of God let loose on a fourth part of the earth. Then great persecution, and the killing of the saints of that day. Then the most awful convulsion of society, so that men say, The day of wrath is come.

Before the opening of the seventh seal there are two things which demand the closest attention. The wonderful parenthesis of chapter 7, and silence in heaven. I would make one remark here as to the time occupied during the judgments of the seals. This is not revealed. It may be short or it may be long. The disciples did not seem to have had any idea that this period of the Church, in which we live, would have lasted eighteen hundred years: our thoughts also may be far too contracted as to the vast events of this wonderful book, and the period of judgment.

CHAPTER 7.

In chapter 7 then an entirely new purpose or work of God is made known. And as the Church is no longer on earth, it is, again the Jews, and the Gentiles, or nations. I take for granted my reader knows that in the Church of God there is neither Jew nor Gentile. (Gal. 3:28.) Before the Church there was the Jew and the Gentile. And again, after the Church is taken to heaven, the tribes of Israel are first sealed, and then an innumerable company, or great multitude, of all nations are saved. The omission of Dan may be to remind us that this is all sovereign grace. We must not suppose that all these are saved between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals. It is a break in the dark clouds of judgment — a bright revelation of the purpose of God. And O, is not the Lamb worthy of the sealed thousands of Israel, and the vast multitude of the nations. Does it not fill your heart with joy — the thought that when the world is seething in the last days of iniquity, even then such a vast harvest of souls shall be saved? You notice, this vast company do not SIT with the Church on thrones around the throne; but they stand before it. This vast company arrest the attention of all heaven; but, beginning with the outer circle of the angels, then the elders, then seraphim and cherubim, the living creatures. What joy, worship, and praise this glorious work of God produces in heaven! And just think that this seventh chapter of the Revelation of Jesus was entirely new then to John, and is little known now. O yes, seraphim and cherubim can rejoice, or rather, I take it, bear full witness to the glory of Christ the Lamb, in the salvation of this vast multitude.

And now a question is raised in heaven by one of the elders: “Who are these?” That they are not the Church is evident, or that question, could not be raised. Even John has to refer to the elder for all answer: but that answer is very distinct: “These are they that come out of great [or, the great] tribulation.” Thus do we learn that this happy multitude shall be gathered from the nations during the time of tribulation, after the Church is completed and taken to be with the Lord. O, gladly could I linger on this glorious revelation of my Lord! Can we not say, Worthy the Lamb to receive this honour and glory?

Do I hear a rejecter of the gospel of God say, “Oh, then I may refuse the grace and truth of God now and yet when the time of tribulation comes on this earth I may then be saved.” Let not Satan thus deceive you. The Holy Ghost has spoken plainly as to this matter. These are His solemn words: “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

These are solemn words; and they are the words of God. They shut out every ray of hope to the present rejecters of Christ. But think what millions and millions are ignorant of the gospel, and no doubt from such this innumerable company will be gathered. Our God is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His thoughts.

Now is it not blessed to read this book, to believe this revelation, to know that God will thus be glorified in the salvation of this vast multitude, though they do not form part of the Church? As the two hundred and eighty-eight singing Levites stood to the twenty-four courses of priesthood, so do these one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed ones, and the one hundred and forty-four thousand of chapter 14, and this multitude, stand to the twenty-four crowned seated worshipping elders. O how perfect are the ways of God!

CHAPTERS 8 & 9.

If chapter 8 has revealed the seraphim action of God — the purification of this vast multitude from sins, by the blood of the Lamb, the live coal from the altar again; sin put away by the one offering on God's altar — then also in chapter 8 we shall find the cherubim action of God in consuming judgment.

It is of all importance to notice, that the ways of God in this book are on the combined principle of seraphim and cherubim, as His throne is revealed to us in chapter 4. But before the cherubim action, there is silence in heaven. This is very solemn. And now the seven angels prepare to announce the judgments direct from God: and to them were given seven trumpets. Still, before the judgment, another bright gleam of seraphim glory. The prayers of all saints are offered upon the golden altar, the altar of incense. Now is not that a wondrous scene? The prayers of every saint, down there in that world of violence and iniquity, coming up before God, with all the sweet perfume and all the acceptance of the value of Christ, once offered on the altar? How deeply all this will interest us seated in the heavenly vision! Let us think of it now.

And now the most solemn action is brought before us: "The angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth." We must compare this with the cherubim action of Ezekiel 10, as the fire was there cast on the city.

Now the fire, mark, of the altar is cast to the earth. And what is fire of the altar? Is it not that wrath of God which consumed the holy One made sin for us? The throne of God is, so to speak, composed of seraphim and cherubim. God must purify by the burning seraphim, by the fire of the altar, or consume by the cherubim judgments of the fire of the altar. In other words, they who have refused the mercy of God, through the atoning death of Jesus on the altar, must endure the same wrath against sin that consumed that holy sacrifice for sin on the altar. My reader, you and I must be either purified by that fire, or for ever judged by that fire.

Providential judgments there have been, and will be again more terrible, as in chapter 6. But this is now altogether another thing — fire from the altar — the very wrath that made Jesus cry out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" — that same wrath will then be cast on the earth. Well might heaven pause in silence.

If you examine the first four trumpets you will find that they symbolize the blighting of all that supplies the needs, or pleasures, of man — at least on a third part of the earth, where these judgments fall — the trees, the sea, the rivers, the sun, the moon, and the stars. The judgments thus fall on the circumstances of

men during the four terrible blasts of these trumpets. Does not this shew out the marvellous long-suffering of God? There is warning after warning; and even now, though the judgments of God through angelic agency begin, still the mildest are first. But at last the fifth angel sounds; and men are now tormented in their own persons. The bottomless abyss is opened; hell, as it were, let loose on earth: Gross darkness now covers men's minds. And out of this darkness come terrible locusts. These seem to me to figure wicked spirits, which shall sting men with horrible doctrines; for the angel of the bottomless abyss is their king — and thus are men tormented five months.

“The sixth angel sounded.” And the four angels, bound in the great river Euphrates, are loosed. And a vast army of horsemen, a terrible show of human power and strength, pours into the prophetic earth from the east. These seem to me to be possessed by the wicked spirits of the previous woe. Though Satan is the god of this age, yet his power is only permitted so far; but who can conceive the state of the earth when Satan, and the hosts of demons, are thus let loose? And, my reader, if you are not caught up to meet Christ, and be for ever with the Lord, you may see all this, and feel it in your own terrified soul!

I do not dwell further on these six trumpets; as my object is only to help the enquirer in reading this wondrous book.

CHAPTER 10.

As there was a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seal, so is there also between the sixth and seventh trumpet.

A mighty one cried with a loud voice, and seven thunders uttered their voices. We are not permitted to know the things uttered by these thunder voices: but if we compare a trumpet with thunder, we may expect those last scenes of ripened human iniquity to be indescribable. But time shall be no longer delayed; and in the days when the seventh angel shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished. This is dispensationally a point of great value. The period of the mystery, or the interval, thus comes to a close: the break in the dealings of God with Israel here closes: and those dealings commence by measure and time in the next chapter. It is sweet to the mind at first thought to enter on such history; “but it shall make thy belly bitter.”

How sad it is to think of the ignorance that prevails in Christendom as to all these things, which are surely coming on the earth. Even many Christians are deceived, and under the delusion that this wicked world will be converted by the gospel. They cannot have read and understood this revelation.

CHAPTER 11.

It is of the greatest importance new to notice the division of the book at this point. We are now on Jewish ground. The temple is rebuilt, with its altar, and worshippers. The court and the city shall the Gentiles tread under foot forty-two months. This is the marked change in the book, and here dates commence. There are also two witnesses prophesying twelve hundred and sixty days, like the prophets of old in Israel. At the end of this period of testimony, the beast, who then comes on the scene, makes war with them. These prophets will be a great plague to the men of the earth, who try hard to say, There is no God. And when the prophets are slain, the world rejoices. Oh what a picture this is of man! They are raised to life, and received up into heaven. And then a great earthquake takes place. Surely these things will come to pass.

The seventh angel sounds. And this brings before us the end of all these judgments: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." The Church, and all the redeemed, represented by the four and twenty elders, are still seated before God. Nothing shall ever disturb their unclouded rest. They worship also, and give thanks.

CHAPTER 12.

Chapter 12 should begin with the last verse of chapter 11. The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in it the ark of His testament. This shews that we are now occupied with the revelation of God as to Israel. His counsels as to them shall stand. I must remind my reader again, that all this becomes simple, and easy to be understood, just in proportion as we are acquainted with the scriptures. Who is this woman clothed with these emblems of supremacy? If we turn to Micah 4:8, there can be no doubt who she is. "And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." Do you think God can break this promise? Read the first eight verses carefully. To a person ignorant of scripture, chapter 12 must present serious difficulties. In verse 2 there is the pain and travailing in birth of Israel; and an objecter might say, there was no commotion, or travail, of the Jews at the birth of Christ, the man-child. Jerusalem was asleep, and a few peaceful shepherds only were awake. Quite true. If we turn again to the prophets, you will see that the revelation rightly presumes that we should know that this must be so; and that the travail of Israel is not at the birth of Christ at all. Turn to Micah 4 again. The travail of Israel is described in verse 10, when she has gone out of the city, even to Babylon. "There shalt thou be delivered." Does not the Lord also speak of this sore travail in Matthew 24:15-22? Now let us read carefully Micah 5:2, 3. In verse 2, the man child is born: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Thus we have the place of His birth, Bethlehem, not Babylon; and though He is to be ruler in Israel, yet is He caught up to God: "shall he come forth unto me." And though He thus went to God, yet was He equal to God: "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

But what of Zion and the time of her travail? In verse 3 the prophet says they shall be given up "UNTIL THE TIME that she which travaileth hath brought forth; THEN the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." Is not this very striking? Jesus, the future Judge of Israel, was smitten on the cheek: He was rejected: He did go unto God. Israel has been given up, and will be until the time of travail, the great tribulation.

Some may have thought, in reading Revelation 12 that the time of travail was at the birth of the man child; but scripture is very clear as to this. Turn to Isaiah 66:7: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child." Then, it may be asked, what is brought forth at the time of travail? See the very next verse. Verse 8; "as soon as she travailed, she

brought forth her children.” Ah, we may have confused thoughts; but how clear is scripture!

With these scriptures before us, we now turn to Revelation 12. Israel, who is to have the first dominion, is in travail and pain: and now mark, the very symbol used in chapter 13 to describe the power of the Roman empire, is used here to describe the power of Satan, the great dragon: “having seven heads and ten horns.” This is an awful fact, that the source of the power of the Roman empire is Satan. Christians who meddle with this world’s politics would do well to ponder this. Can Satan be reformed? Then can his kingdom be improved? But here all this is connected with the Jews. When the man child was born, we see Satan was the mover of Herod, the representative of the Roman power, in seeking to destroy the infant Lord: and again at the cross. But He is to rule all nations, and He was raised up from the dead and caught up to God.

If you look carefully at verses 5 and 6, you place, as it were, one point of the compass at the time of Satan’s hatred of Christ on earth to His ascension, and the other point reaches to the time of Israel’s tribulation. Thus the whole of the period of the Church is entirely omitted between these two verses: as is the case in the well-known passage of Isaiah 61:2.

And now the time of sorrow is marked, twelve hundred and sixty days; but, as always, these dates refer to the Jews — the time of tribulation so fully described in Matthew 24. At that time will take place what is called the war in heaven; and then Satan is cast out of heaven to the earth. This gives great joy to the heavens, and terrible woe to the inhabitants of the earth. Satan will then direct his special wrath against the Jews, but they flee into the wilderness, and are nourished there during the three years and a half.

Thus has our God been pleased to reveal to us the hatred of Satan against His Son as Messiah, and against His chosen earthly people. All this we have seen in heaven, as indeed we shall be there when these things take place. We now get the development of Satan’s power amongst men on earth.

CHAPTER 13.

A beast is seen to rise up out of the sea; and the description of this beast shews distinctly that it is the same beast that is described in Daniel — the fourth empire of Gentile power, or the Roman empire. But this revelation is not of what had taken place; it was seen to “rise up.” It is the seven headed and ten horned beast which suddenly appears on the scene again, in a new and most dreadful state.

It may be asked, How can John see this rising up, when the Roman empire did exist in his time? We shall get the answer to this question when we come to chapter 17. This terrible beast has the characteristics of the leopard, the bear, and the lion. And the dragon, or Satan, shall give him his power and throne, and authority. One of the heads of this dreadful empire is wounded as it were unto death: this wound is healed: and now all the world wonder after this beast. They worship Satan, and they worship this terrible beast. Such is the future of Europe. What a revelation to the servants of Jesus! and shall they mingle with that world which will surely come to this? Are you surprised at this? I should be more surprised if it came to anything better. Having rejected Christ for so many centuries, is there anything wonderful that God should at last give men up to their own folly and choice? Yet, how dreadful the thought, that the worship of Satan, and the beast, or head of the Roman empire, will assuredly be the worship of all that dwell upon the earth, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb! and power is given during this time of tribulation to overcome the saints of that period.

And now, when the peoples become, as it were, ordered, or formed, under Satan, another beast comes up out of the earth. He assumes the look of the Lamb, but his voice betrays him: “he spake as a dragon.” He has immense influence and power. This is the wicked one. He had two horns as a lamb. Now though we must not confound this wicked one with the woman, the great whore, yet I judge, from Daniel 11:36-38 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12, that the final apostasy of both the Jews and Christendom will find its centre and head in this wicked one. There is a trinity of wicked ones, and in fearful imitation of God. The head of the restored empire takes the place of God. This lamb-like dragon-speaking Antichrist exerciseth all the power of this first beast, and is co-equal with him, and doeth great wonders. And Satan takes the place of the Holy Ghost on earth. Idolatry is set up and enforced by death. Then they that dwell upon the earth shall be deceived. God in righteous judgment sends them strong delusion, that they all may be damned.

I ask, Can any man, having the Spirit of God, fail to discern that everything around is tending to this frightful end? And what a climax of human progress!

All this will surely come to pass: it is impossible for God to lie. Satan is already beginning to whirl his vortex: are you in it, my reader?

CHAPTER 14.

We have now another higher scene before us. Not the reign of the king in Zion, but a kind of joyful anticipation of that approaching event. He who shall be king is still seen as a Lamb, and identified with the remnant, the hundred and forty-four thousand. Is not this anticipation most cheering? I judge it marks the near approach of the reign of Christ: and this gives great joy, in heaven. They are connected with heaven, but are not the Church, or the redeemed as seen in heaven in chapter 4. “They sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders.”

These are kept pure from the fearful apostasy. They follow the Lamb. The opening of the seals of judgments by the Lamb as it had been slain, caused the new song to be sung in chapter 5. Now the sight of the Lamb on mount Sion raises the joyful anticipation of that reign in righteousness, borne witness to by cherubim and seraphim upholding the throne, and witnessed by all the redeemed, symbolized by the four and twenty elders. There is something most fitting in this burst of joy, remembering that this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. To turn from the dreadful state of the earth during the reign of the beast, and to anticipate the reign of Christ — can anything give more intense joy?

Yesterday I met an old preacher who reminded me of scenes he had been with me in thirty years ago. I remarked, that when I was led to see the coming of the Lord in scripture, and to wait for Him from heaven, that separated me entirely from those things. And I went on to speak of the blessedness of that coming event, when we shall be for ever with the Lord. He pointed to his breast, and said, “He has come: He is here; He is in me now.” And he said it in a manner which shewed he desired no other coming. I do not know which is the more deplorable — the ignorance, or selfishness, of so many, who, like this old preacher, get a little comfort to their own souls, and Satan may go on reigning over this poor dark world; Christ may still be rejected. Now what can this blessed revelation of Jesus be to them? I suppose they never care to read it. Ah, my soul, the coming reign of Jesus: this is the theme of deepest joy!

I do not doubt but that this very remnant will have a peculiar place when the Lamb shall reign. Seraphim and cherubim shall support and be the witness of his throne. What a reign of righteousness! The cross, on which He ended red wrath, will be the expression, and the principle, of the throne. What a theme for meditation!

It is important to notice the historical order of this chapter, in its seven distinct announcements. The joyful anticipation of the reign of Christ. Then the announcement of the everlasting gospel to all nations. It seems rather difficult to us, who are so accustomed to the present gospel of grace, to understand the good

news of “Fear God, and give glory to him; FOR THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT is come; and worship him,” &c. Surely this has been the eternal purpose of God, and “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8.) It is good news that the present reign of Satan will shortly close.

The everlasting gospel is evidently linked with the reign, and though the hour or time of judgment is limited, yet its blessed effects are everlasting. This was always foretold by the prophets; and the gospel preached by the Lord was “The reign of God is at hand;” and again will be proclaimed to all nations. Blessed prospect when all shall be subject to Him!

The next messenger announces the fall of Babylon. Details of this we have further on: but one thing is made known by the order of these announcements — the destruction of apostate Christendom before the crisis of the beast’s iniquity: as in the next announcement the wrath of God is poured out without mixture on those who worship the beast. All this we shall have in chapter 17. I only notice the order. False apostate Christendom will be destroyed to make way for a still worse thing, the worship of the beast. Dreadful will be that time, and the final end of all who thus give themselves up to Satan is described. And what a time for the patience of the remnant, who keep the commandments of God!

And next in order, a voice is heard from heaven, saying, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.” In God’s past dealings with Israel, long life was a mark of His blessing. But in this time of dreadful iniquity, to die is the mark of favour. Oh, how little the world knows or expects such a state of things!

Then comes the time of the harvest, and next the vintage. The Lord’s parable, and its explanation of the harvest of the earth, in Matthew 13, must be remembered; and now the time is come. The harvest would thus refer more to the world at large, whilst the vintage describes the last terrible judgments on the Jews, the vine of the earth — most dreadful will be the slaughter around THE CITY. This is the time of trouble such as never was, and never shall be again. We must never forget that the first thought, yea, God’s thought, running through this prophetic future, is the coming reign of the Lamb, on mount Sion. But before we arrive at the actual coming of the King of kings, we have further revelation.

CHAPTERS 15 & 16.

Chapters 15 and 16 must be read together, as the revelation of the closing scenes of the wrath of God. This must be the very close; as John saw “them that had gotten the victory over the beast,” they stand on the emblem of solid purity, yet mingled with fire, shewing the tribulation out of which they had come. The theme of their song also is the coming reign.

Special attention is called to the fact, that “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened;” and also that the seven executors of the wrath of God come out of the temple; and more, that one of the living creatures gave unto these seven angels the seven bowls, full of the wrath of God. Thus, as seraphim and cherubim combined bear witness to the worthiness of the Lamb, they also bear witness that the same wrath must be poured out. We have seen this in chapter 8 in the third part of the earth in the sounding of the trumpets. Now it is on the earth. This is evidently the prophetic Roman earth: upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them that worshipped his name. The second angel poured out his vial or bowl upon the sea: those nations that surround the Roman earth, and are in a state of confusion. Then the third poured out his bowl of wrath on the rivers, or streams of distinct peoples.

In the midst of these judgments the angel of the waters, the one watching over the peoples, ascribes righteousness to the Lord, which art, and wast, the Holy One. And the altar responds, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.” O, what a light the altar throws on the judgments that are about to be executed on an impenitent earth! Look at the pouring out of the wrath of God on the nations, and then pause, and gaze on the Son of God, once bearing the wrath of God on the cross. God is everlastingly the same. He will surely act according to the cross of Christ; whether in the purification of His saints, or in the pouring out of His wrath. What a key this is to understand this blessed book!

How often the burning victim on the altar of sacrifice had pointed forward to the consuming wrath of God, as seen on the cross! And now the fourth angel shall pour out his bowl of wrath upon the sun, and men are scorched with fire; and they will blaspheme the name of God. The supreme power becomes the source of scorching judgment and there will be no repentance. How little men know what is coming on the earth!

The fifth angel will pour out his bowl on Rome, the seat of the beast. “And his kingdom was full of darkness.” What a blank to all human hopes and delusions! It will be a foretaste of hell! the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. “They gnawed their tongue for pain.” Filled with

blasphemy, they will not repent. Surely the time is at hand! These things are at the very door; and men heed them not.

“The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.” The Euphrates is the eastern boundary of the Roman empire. The boundary will be broken up, and a way opened for the kings of the east to come. This must bring Palestine into great prominence; and the western empire is moved by this to go forth to the great battle. The trinity of iniquity puts forth all its unclean power: unclean spirits like frogs go out of the mouth of the beast (the head of the empire), but the dragon is named first, and last the man of sin, the false prophet. Satan, the emperor, and the man of sin: what a trinity! Men will have these; but they reject the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And they will receive and be led by the odious spirits that proceed from this terrible trinity of iniquity! And when the hosts of the east come against this apostate empire, they come as the bowl of the wrath of God. These things cannot have been yet fulfilled. The empire is not yet restored, and the man of sin has not yet appeared. Let not then the fancies of men take away your attention from the awfully solemn fact, that these things will surely soon come to pass!

The seventh angel poured out his vial or bowl of wrath into the air. A voice is heard out of the temple in heaven FROM THE THRONE, saying, “It is done,” and very terrible is the convulsion of the empire at this closing scene of the pouring out of divine wrath. The cities of the nations fell: and can we not see a vast preparation going on? The world, though it rejects the testimony of God, yet seems to expect some such terrible convulsion, of which a mighty earthquake is a striking symbol.

Then Babylon comes into remembrance. Ah, you may join her, ye rejecters of the gospel, but remember, in doing so, you voluntarily take upon yourselves her murders, and her guilt; and you must drink, with her, of the cup of the wine of the fierceness of the wrath of God. Dream not that these things have been fulfilled. Each of my readers will soon be either called up to meet the Lord, and be with Him, in unclouded rest, or be left, a rejecter of God, in these terrible and unparalleled judgments that are at the very doors.

CHAPTER 17.

Chapter 17 gives a very special revelation of the judgment of apostate Babylon, and her position as to the restored Roman empire.

Who is this woman? I beg my reader to ponder this question. She sits upon many waters; and the waters are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. She assumes the purple and scarlet. Who is this Mystery, Babylon the Great — mother of abominations — this drunken murderess? John marvelled greatly at her; and so may we. Well, the angel gives the explanation: “I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.” And first the angel explains as to the beast. Let us attend carefully. “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit.” That this is the fourth empire, as described by the prophet Daniel, there can be no doubt; and we know that the fourth empire was the Roman. Its seat of power the seven-hilled city. And as this woman is seen sitting on the beast, she must be where it is. The centre then of this dreadfully corrupt system is Rome.

There are several solemn facts made known to us in this chapter. The Roman empire was: it no longer exists. It shall be again — shall ascend out of the bottomless abyss. Its whole future character shall be satanic. The rising up again of this fearful empire shall astonish the world. Five forms of government had passed away: the imperial then was the sixth. The other form of government is not yet come. The seventh will continue only for a very short space; as the eighth, who shall be of the seventh, is the terrible beast.

In this last form of the Roman empire it will be composed of ten kingdoms. These give their power and strength unto the beast. This is certainly all future. The Roman empire was, is not, and thus shall be again. Can it be denied that many centuries after this revelation was given, a false apostate church has had its centre at Rome? that this church has become the woman of the world, whilst professing to be the bride of Christ? Has she not so entirely ignored the heavenly calling of the Church, as to become one with the nations? Is there one mark of this woman that does not literally describe the apostate church? In verse 16 we are told of her terrible destruction by the ten kingdoms of the empire. All this, my reader, is surely true.

CHAPTER 18.

Passing now from the empire, we have the character and fall of apostate Christendom brought before us in terrible detail. Now whilst Rome is the mother and centre of all these abominations, yet it is impossible to avoid observing, that this description takes in all that is false in Christendom. As the daughters grow up, there is more family likeness. This must be so wherever the church becomes one with or marries the world. The true principle of the Church is a people taken out of the world; one with the risen Christ; joint members of His body; baptized by one Spirit into one body. The essential principle of a worldly religious establishment is the opposite of the Church of God. It is the world, called Christian, and the Christians in it are thus in Babylon, in the confusion and captivity of the world.

But, as my object is not so much to comment, as to lead souls to solemn meditation on this book, I will only ask you seriously to read this chapter, and tell me if it does not describe protestant nations as well as Romish. Is there greater commercial prosperity and greater iniquity anywhere than in the church-and-world nation of England? From the study of these chapters it seems probable that as the kings agree with the beast, so the daughters may agree with the mother; at all events the whole is spoken of as Babylon the Great: and can any one fail to see that everything in Christendom is becoming more like Rome? And what will it be when the true Church of God is taken up to be with the Lord, and Christendom is given up to strong delusion, to believe it lie? What think you of that call, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her sins?"

CHAPTER 19.

It is remarkable what deep interest is taken in heaven in the fall and judgment of Christendom, or the apostate church. A great voice is heard in heaven. This loud Alleluia and shout of praise is about the righteous judgment of God on this great whore. The glorified Church also worship God, saying, "Amen, Alleluia." The four living creatures, seen for the last time, also say, "Amen, Alleluia." Seraphim and cherubim bear witness to the righteous judgment of God on apostate Babylon. One day with the Lord is as a thousand years; but this terrible overthrow in judgment must come. The Lord use this searching truth in separating us more to Himself! What an end of all human boasting! the end of the period we live in, and so near! If we believe all this, it must separate us from all around to God Himself.

It is remarkable that the marriage of the Lamb does not take place until after the judgment of apostate Christendom. How terribly dishonouring to Christ is that which calls itself the Church!

A voice came out of the throne. Let us still keep in mind the coming reign of Christ. The great multitude, with a voice like thunder, say, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." But one thing above all others shall give joy and gladness to this vast multitude — the marriage of the Lamb. The bride, the Lamb's wife, now takes her true separate place in the glory. As the four and twenty elders had represented all the redeemed, now the bride is seen, distinct and separate from the vast multitude, who are called to the marriage, and rejoice; the four and twenty elders are seen no more. The Church is never found in scripture until Christ the Head had been raised from the dead, and ascended on high. But it may be asked, Were none saved then before the Church was formed at Pentecost? and are none saved after the Church has been taken up (as in 1 Thessalonians 4, and represented in heaven, in Revelation 4); that is, during these days of iniquity and judgments of which we have thus spoken? Oh, doubtless; and these no doubt are portions of this vast multitude, who are evidently distinct from the bride, and who rejoice because her marriage is come. Was not Rebekah distinct from her maids who attended her? was not Ruth distinct from the women who rejoiced in Bethlehem's gate? Is not the bride distinct from the guests at the marriage feast? Even so do we find the wife of the Lamb distinct from even the rejoicing heavenly hosts. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

When God looked at Adam in the garden — figure of Him that was to come — He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help

meet for him.” And the Lord God laid the man in the typical place of death — “a deep sleep” — and out of that dead Adam, so to speak, He builded the living woman. Not one member of Eve was built, or formed, until Adam was thus laid in the type of the death of Him that was to come. Even so, out of the death of Jesus God has not only raised Him from among the dead, but the Church is raised up in Him. The life of the Christian is the risen life of Christ, the Head of the body the Church. He must suffer the death of the cross, the atonement for sin, and be raised from the dead, before the second Eve could be formed. O blessed theme! God, in past eternity, looking forward, and seeing the risen glorified Son, was saying, It is not good for Him to be alone: I will build a help meet for Him. God thought it; God said it; and God has done it. All, all is of God. O think of the predestined glory of the Church. Whatever Adam was, such was every particle of Eve. Whatever Christ is, as the risen man from among the dead, such shall be, such is, His bride. We shall see Him as He is, and be like Him.

There is one thought more sweet than all the rest — the marriage of the Lamb is the beginning of the manifested glory of Christ. The marriage having taken place, heaven is immediately opened, and He comes forth with all the armies of heaven, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

O glorious event! The wicked are now to be destroyed: evil is no more to lift up its head. Where is now the power of the beast, the satanic head of the Roman empire? where the kings of the earth, and their armies? Read their dreadful doom. We are told the beast the head of the empire, and the man of sin the false prophet, will not die, but will both be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The personal coming of the Lord Jesus occupies a large place, both in the prophecies of the Old and New Testament; but what we have in this chapter is new, and most solemn, and true.

CHAPTER 20.

The next act of judgment falls on Satan. The time is come that he should be bound, and cast into the bottomless pit. This is absolutely necessary during the thousand years blessed reign of Christ! Could Christ and Satan reign at the same time? Impossible. Now Satan is the god of this world. We have seen in chapter 12 that he is, as the dragon, the very source of the power of the Roman empire, both past and to come. But you ask, Are not the “powers that be” ordained of God? Most surely. But have not, those “powers that be” rejected and murdered the Son of God, the rightful King? And does not the whole world lie in the hands of the wicked one? This is a solemn question to be quite clear about. Is Satan the god of this world? and does he continue to be so until the event foretold in this chapter?

Perhaps my reader asks, If the world has rebelled against Christ, murdered Him, and is now led on and ruled over by Satan, how can a Christian take part in the politics of the world, instead of taking his place with Christ in rejection? I do not see how he can, without being unfaithful to Christ. No doubt many do so, through ignorance; but not without great loss to their souls. God in His providence does overrule; but the present reign of Satan in this world is a fearful fact. A little while then, and the apostate church, or Christendom, shall be fully judged; and then the apostate empire; and then Satan, the prime mover in all this iniquity. Who can conceive the blessed contrast, when the old serpent, the devil, Satan, shall be cast out. Men have no idea how he leads them on.

And then the first resurrection will be completed. Could there be a more certain proof that many will be saved who do not form part of the Church, the bride of the Lamb? Surely the bride was completed when the marriage took place in heaven, chapter 19. And yet all these are raised from the dead, and form the completion of the first resurrection. All who had been slain, refusing to worship the beast, will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. This is all a new revelation, and embraces a company not included in the extent of this resurrection, as made known to Paul: but it is clearly revealed here. The rest of the dead will not live again until the thousand years are finished. The first resurrection is very blessed. How surely the Church has lost all this precious teaching, and gone back to the old Jewish idea of a general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked together. Scripture never contradicts itself, and nowhere does it teach a general resurrection.

There is then most certainly, not only a first resurrection, but a thousand years — the glorious millennial reign of Christ — before the second resurrection. That this first resurrection refers to the persons of the redeemed is most clear, for “they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Unspeakably blessed as will be this period of the reign of Christ, and no enemy to tempt and deceive; yet from verse 7 to verse 10 we have the fact made known that even after all this happy season of millennial rest — when Satan is let loose for a little, and the last time, on earth — the nations immediately fall into the snare of Satan: the final proof that the creature, if left to himself in any circumstance, cannot stand.

We have no information that the nations will all be born again. During the millennium, righteousness shall reign; in the eternal state righteousness shall dwell. Judgment from God falls on the rebellious host, and Satan is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet have been during the thousand years.

Then takes place the judgment of the great white throne; and the dead stand before God. At this point the reader may remember the judgment in Matthew 25: the sheep and the goats. Perhaps you ask “Is not that the general judgment? Are not the wicked dead and the righteous both raised up together, and then separated by the Judge?” How strange that such an error should have become so common! If you read that parable again, you will find there is no thought either of the righteous or wicked dead; no thought of the resurrection at all; but simply the judgment of the living nations, at the coming of Christ. That is quite a different scene from this judgment of the dead, and evidently will take place a thousand years before this. This is not at the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; but the heaven and the earth fled away. Woe be to you, my reader, if you are one of those who stand before this white throne. Judgment there must be, either on the cross, or on the throne. If you can look back in faith to the cross, then sins are put away, to be remembered no more. If your sins shall be judged at the great white throne, then your place must be in the lake of fire for ever and ever. O, ponder this revelation of the great white throne! Deepen, O my God, in my soul, the sense of thy mercy to me!

CHAPTERS 21 & 22.

The new heaven and the new earth now appear, and up to verse 8 the prophecy views the eternal state. The Church is seen now coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Everything earthly has passed away: it is now pure as from the hands of God; entirely heavenly. Not only pure, but incapable of impurity. We shall have a fuller description of this further on; but there is the new earth, and God dwells with men. In the eternal state we do not find the word “reign;” but “dwell:” God dwells with men. Still the Church has a distinct place, as the tabernacle of God. “The tabernacle of God is with men.” O, my soul, meditate on this supreme blessedness. There is nothing now to subdue. The eternal Son has subdued everything, and now gives up the reign; for in the new heaven and the new earth dwells righteousness. And as the Son is ever the revelation of the Father, He now, not as man, but as God, wipes away all tears, and banishes from the new creation all sorrow and pain. As God He makes it impossible for this to be again; for the former things are passed away. I can only give an outline; but every sentence in these verses is an ocean of blessedness. And He who thus makes all things new says “These words are true and faithful.”

It may now fairly be asked, But what of the wicked through the unending ages of eternity? It is remarkable that before their eternal doom is declared we have the most solemn assurance that none are now excluded from the life everlasting: “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all [or these] things.” Yes, it will be a dreadful thing for the lost one to remember in eternity that the word of God had thus been pledged. As Jesus says, “He that cometh unto me shall in no wise be cast out.” O, thirsty one, God is pledged to give the water of life freely.

“But” — yes, the eternal doom of the rejecter is thus described, when the tabernacle of God is with men, when He throughout eternity shall dwell with them — “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Thus the state of torment is as eternal as the eternal state of the blessed: in that lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Chapter 20:10.

Nothing can be more certain than the awful fact of the eternity of punishment; and here at verse 8, with this solemn fact the prophecy as it were comes to a close. And it is also remarkable, the denial of this solemn truth is the last great effort of Satan to overthrow the truth of God. From thousands of pens and tongues Satan is saying “Yea, hath God said, for ever and ever? Oh, He does not mean it. Do not believe it.” Children of God, beware. This denial of God’s truth

often reveals a minister of Satan, though men may regard him as an angel of light.

From chapter 21:9, to 22:6, we return as it were; and one of the seven angels describes the bride the Lamb's wife. This does not go on prophetically, but evidently is a revelation of the Church during the millennial reign; just as one of the same seven angels described the character of the false Babylon after her fall. After the Church has been seen in eternal glory, then we return and see her fully described during millennial rest. Many features are eternal: blessed be God! but we shall see the bride of the Lamb in relation to the earth.

She is the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. O how precious this character is! It is not merely absence from evil, but essentially, inherently holy: holiness from God, pure as heaven itself: all heavenly, "from God:" all of Adam, all of sin, for ever gone!

"Oh how I thirst

The chains to burst."

I cannot write; I long to be there. O let us awake, and wait for our Lord.

"Having, the glory of God; and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." The very revealed glory in which God appeared the moment the Church was caught up and was in heaven in chapter 4 Jesus said, "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." "Pure as crystal." Not one unholy thought: accepted in the Beloved. But it is the glory of God, and "having" it! Hath not God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus? More could not be given. And all so certain, and so near!

We must bear in mind that this is the revelation of the Church, as it is to be seen when the world shall know that God hath loved us even as He hath loved Christ. The Church shall be seen having the glory of God, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Precious stones are used to express earthly glory; but who can tell what is the brightness of that glory, set forth by these heavenly stones? The city is described and measured by the golden reed. All is perfect in divine righteousness. From the north or south, the east or west, the nations shall see the same divine perfection. In Solomon's temple the altar was four square, the exact size of the holiest. The death of the cross must be, and was, equal to all the claims of God. There is now no longer need of the altar. The city lieth four square: all is divinely equal; divinely perfect. The holiest was twenty cubits every way. The city is twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.” As the apostle Paul heard things impossible to utter, so it seems to me these divine symbols of glory cannot be expressed in words.

We know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. “And he that sat [upon the throne] was to look upon like a jasper.” (Chap. 4:3.) Oh what then shall be the glory of that city, the bride of the Lamb, when the building of the wall of it is of jasper! All that can express glory is used in the foundations and building of this city. It is essential purity; inherent holiness; “Pure gold;” “clear glass;” “transparent glass.”

It should be noticed that in themselves all these stones are dark: the light is all reflected. Sweet it is to own that when made like Him, still all the glorious perfections will be Christ Himself reflected in the Church. The Holy Ghost may enable you to learn much of this our future glory, by comparing it with Ezekiel 28:13-15; and also the four-square ephod, with its precious stones, covering the heart of the high priest. The eternal purpose of God shall be fulfilled — are not our names now on the heart of our great High Priest? Then shall we most certainly be in that place of glory prepared for us, of which this wondrous building is the symbol. It is the pearl of great price, to redeem which to Himself Jesus came down from the highest glory. No more possibility of defilement: the streets of the city are of pure gold. That is, we shall find nothing but divine purity. No going into the temple, and out; no change from worship to carelessness: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. No need of created helps — of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

If you read carefully Isaiah 60, 62, 65:18, 19, and many other prophecies of the future glory of Jerusalem, you will be struck with the similarity there is betwixt the earthly and the heavenly cities, in many points. Zephaniah 3:17 may also help us to understand the relative position of both during the millennium. “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice OVER thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy OVER thee with singing.” A comparison of these scriptures will shew that the heavenly city, the bride of the Lamb, will be over the earthly city of the great King. And thus “the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it;” God resting in His love over it. It will be joy and singing. O sweet the sound will be, when Jerusalem the earthly shall re-echo the songs of Jerusalem the golden. Nothing shall interrupt heaven’s harmony; for nothing that defileth can enter there.

There are also points of contrast surely between the earthly city and the heavenly. I only notice one, to prove that they are not the same. Where the future earthly Jerusalem is described as the metropolis of all nations in Isaiah

2:1-4, it is said, “And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks,” &c. This could not for a moment be applied to the heavenly city. No need for either swords or ploughshares there. Oh how clear and distinct is the word of God! Sad that man should confound what God has so made to differ.

“He that believeth hath everlasting life.” And that life is now shewn to the servant John under two figures; the “pure river of the water of life,” and “the tree of life.” The source of the river is the throne of God and of the Lamb. “Grace reigns through righteousness.” According to the established throne in righteousness, flows forth, in its river-like abundance, the water of life, clear as crystal. That which proceeds from God must be pure as He is pure. These are the words of God; “but what will it be to be there?”

And now the tree of life, no longer forbidden or guarded, but yielding her fruit every month. Thus life and healing flows forth, and is for the life and healing of the nations. There shall be no more curse; for sin has been put away according to the righteousness of God, for “the THRONE of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”

What a blessed scene this is! “and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.” The activities of the Church the bride shall all be according to God; shall bear the mark of God. They shall dwell in the light of God; “and they shall reign for ever and ever.” And all this is sure, on the very faithfulness of God. For He thus “sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”

This verse 6 finishes the description of the heavenly city. Then follows the closing remarks. And first, the Lord would have us remember this, that there is nothing between this moment and His coming. “Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” His coming is to be before the soul as the very next event. You may fall asleep and depart: “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” Have you just now written a letter to a friend, saying you hope, if the Lord will, to come and see him at such a place? Well, you may perhaps go — many things may take place — but the one event really to expect next is the coming of the Lord: “Behold, I come quickly.”

I do not see how any one can thus expect the Lord as the next event, unless he believes the taking up of the Church, as made known to the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4. If we are falsely building on dates, which do not belong to this period of the Church; and if we are only looking for the Lord when He shall come in judgment on the nations, and to reign; then we have seen in this book that many events have to take place before He thus comes. The Roman empire is not even reconstructed; the beast has not yet taken his place. The second beast,

the man of sin, the false prophet, has not yet been manifested. Babylon, so far from being judged, is coming more into favour and fashion every day, even in England. We have seen that the Lord comes to take His Church before all these events; and therefore faith can take hold of these words, “Behold, I come quickly,” and can hope for the coming of the Lord as the next event. And to deny the coming of the Lord to take the Church is to falsify these words, and practically to say, The Lord cannot come quickly.

Another closing remark of great importance is the instruction, “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.” Daniel was commanded to seal his prophecy, two thousand four hundred years ago, until the time of the end. That time is therefore now come, or near; for this prophecy is not to be closed, for the time is at hand. And this surely is a time for individual faithfulness and holiness. The final state of Christendom is described in verse 11. I believe this is being developed all around. Nor can the true saints of God reform the masses; but in the end it will be “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Keep the coming of the Lord before the soul, in the midst of all that discourages; for again He says, “Behold, I come quickly.” And He will reward every man according to his works. And He reminds us that it is indeed Himself: “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” O, is this the living Jesus, the same Jesus? is He the bright and morning star? Yes; it is our Lord, the one for whom we wait.

No doubt the Spirit is acting powerfully where owned, and not grieved: and one word is heard by Jesus from the Spirit and the bride — “Come.” And if the ear of my reader should be opened, “let him that heareth say, Come.” And where the hope of the Lord’s coming is fresh in the soul there will be gospel testimony. “And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Then follows solemn warnings against any who shall add to, or take away from, the word of this book. And the last parting word to us from the Lord is again, “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

C. S.