

VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

A Study of the Book of Revelation

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to Korea -*

*"But thanks be to God, who giveth us the
victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- First Corinthians 15:57*

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THE AUTHOR AND HIS RELATION TO THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED

"---All authority hath been given unto me---go ye therefore--- and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."
Matthew 28:18-20.

There are few things that contribute to the understanding and appreciation of a book like familiarity with its author, or some personal relationship to him. As we begin the consideration of that inspired book which has been appropriately called THE CROWN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON, a study of its author and his relation to the people addressed should prepare us for a clearer insight into the meaning and message of the book. Instead of it being a book of mystery, as it is so often considered, we trust that it may indeed become to each of us the book of Revelation, an unveiling of the "glory of the exalted Christ, and of the sufferings and the ultimate triumph of the militant church."

The ancient title of the book tells us that the author was John--- "The Revelation of John." Several times in the text the author calls himself John. From the earliest times this John has been identified with John, the son of Zebedee, the beloved disciple of Jesus, the author of the fourth gospel. To this effect we have the testimony of the early fathers of the church such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus who lived in such close proximity to the time of the author. The internal evidence of the book represents an author with personal characteristics corresponding to those of the apostle John, and a style in striking respects similar to the fourth gospel, especially in its abundant use of Old Testament material, and in its parallelisms.

At the time when this book was received, John was on Patmos, a small rugged island in the AEgean Sea about forty miles from the mainland. He was probably banished to this spot as a martyr for his faith, "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." According to Sir William Ramsey this banishment was "combined with hard labor for life---in its worst forms a terrible fate, scourgings, perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on bare ground or dark prison, and work under the lash of military overseers."

The apostle had no doubt been a former pastor or evangelist in Asia Minor, and may have enjoyed a large acquaintance and friendship among the Christians of the seven churches addressed. He had a knowledge of the local conditions, a deep personal interest in their spiritual welfare, and a longing to see them come out victorious over the forces of evil that were gathering in the Roman Empire near the close of the first century, and were threatening the very existence of Christianity.

Whereas a knowledge of the human author and his relation to the seven churches is of value in the understanding of the book, it is of supreme importance that we know in some measure the Divine Author and His relation to the people addressed. The first words of the text of the book tell us that this is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." It was He who was both its recipient and its giver. He had received it from God and given it to his servants as the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. At the outset John introduces us to this Divine Author, the central figure of the book. If we, like the apostle, can at the outset get a vision of the Risen Christ, the Head of the church, we will have the master key to the understanding of this book.

In the salutation John presents to us in three striking expressions the exalted character of the great Author---Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Then follow in quick succession, first, an inscription of glory and dominion to our ascended Redeemer; second, a fundamental prophecy of the book that He is coming again; and finally, as a climax to the opening of the book, the authentication by Him who is and who was and who is to come.

To set forth the divine commission of the author John, and at the same time to prepare both him and the churches for what is to follow there is given as the first vision of the Revelation a highly symbolical picture of the Risen Christ present with His church on earth. Before attempting an interpretation of this vision, or of any of the others which follow, let us make clear the method of interpretation which will be used.

One class of interpreters, the preterists, take the view that the book is occupied almost solely with the conditions of the times of the writer near the close of the first century. The futurist swings to the opposite extreme, confining it largely to the last days of the future. Those belonging to the historical school of interpretation, taking a middle ground, find in the events of the book an outline of the history of the church from apostolic days to the end of time. The spiritual or symbolic method interprets the book as pictorial, the unfolding of great truths or principles in the history of the church and the world. While we recognize elements of truth in each of the first three methods, the fourth one, namely, the spiritual or symbolic, is in our judgment the more sane and scriptural mode of interpreting this form of literature,

and therefore will be largely followed in our studies. We shall try not to press the symbolism of the book too far; at the same time look for the exhibition of great fundamental principles governing the history of the church in its age-long conflict, in its preservation, its triumph, and its consummation.

In the opening vision the Divine Author of Revelation appears as one like unto a son of Man---"human but transfigured," and at the same time His divine attributes are unmistakable and awe inspiring. He stands in the midst of the candlestick as our great High Priest and glorified King. He wears not only the priestly robe, but also the golden girdle which was a feature of the dress of kings. His white hair, it has been suggested, was symbolical of the eternity of Jesus, the eyes of fire His omniscience and holy wrath against all that is unholy, the feet of brass His omnipotence. The stars represented the churches; the sword the word of Christ, particularly His word of judgment. His glory is pictured as the sun shining in His strength. What a matchless picture of the majesty, authority, glory, and kingliness of the ascended Christ! This Priest-King is the first and the last and the living One, who was dead, having released us from our sin by the cost of His blood, but is now alive forevermore, and is clothed with unlimited authority. In order to carry out His royal plans and redemptive purposes He could command every being in the universe, all impersonal forces, all lower life, everything. As stated in the words of Dr. R. A. Webb, "He could command the services of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Almighty and Sovereign Godhead and send Him into the world. He could lay under tribute the mightiest archangel to be sent as a flaming spirit to minister to the heirs of salvation. He

could command the mightiest potentates and make the kingdoms of this world do His bidding. He could harness all the impersonal forces of nature and make them His servants in executing His redemptive will, all things but the Father were bound to His service."

At the vision of such a Risen Christ, no wonder that the apostle John fell at His feet as one dead, as did Saul of Tarsus when he saw the risen, glorified Christ. Similar was the effect upon Peter, James, and John in the presence of the transfigured Christ, upon Ezekiel and Isaiah in the presence of the glory of Jehovah, and of Moses before the burning bush. In every age of the church such a vision of the Living King is necessary to prepare a prophet for his mighty task. It is our privilege, thru the power of the Holy Spirit, to have unveiled before us in the last book of the Bible this Matchless King in all His beauty, majesty, glory, and power.

"Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious,

See the Man of Sorrows now;

From the fight returned victorious,

Ev'ry knee to Him shall bow;

Crown Him! Crown Him!

Crowns become the victor's brow."

This first vision not only introduces us to the exalted Divine Author, but also by its significant symbols sets forth His relation to the people addressed. He is in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks which are the seven churches, and He had in His right hand seven stars which represented messengers of the seven churches. We are therefore introduced to a Risen Christ who is not far removed from His churches, but as the great Head of the church, is in their midst, holding the

ministers of His churches in His hand, protecting and supporting them. What an inspiration and comfort must have come to the distressed churches in Asia Minor as they were about to meet in mortal combat with the power of Rome, to have the assurance that the Living King was in their midst, that He was their refuge and strength, and that thru Him victory was certain. Neither is the King of Kings in all His majesty and power forgetful of the lonely exile on Patmos, but brings to him the cheer of victory, and honors him by giving him a part in delivering to the churches the messages of the King.

This Risen Christ has been thru all the ages the consolation of true Israel, the glory of the church, the hope of a lost world. He is in our midst today, holding His church in His hand, bringing comfort and hope and assurance of victory. Such a King as this, clothed with all authority in heaven and on earth, has given to us His divine commission, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations," and with it His divine assurance, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

A CHURCH SURVEY

"For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of men whose heart is perfect toward Him." II Chronicles 16:9.

The first chapter of Revelation has introduced us to the Risen Christ as the Divine Author of the book, and has pictured Him as being in the midst of His churches. In chapters two and three this Risen Christ, in His letters to the seven churches, takes a survey of the churches, reveals their conditions, presents to them a constructive program, thereby revealing the underlying purpose of these letters and the reason for their being where they are.

The Author has already been described in the symbolic picture of chapter one. This description with variations is largely repeated in the letters, that part of the description most appropriate for a particular situation being used in the letter to that church.

The seven historic churches of Asia Minor to which the letters are addressed were, according to Ramsey, located on the great circular road that bound together the most populous, wealthy, and influential part of the province, the west central region. In the historical background we see in this province of Asia two forces in particular arrayed against Christianity. One was imperial worship. In no section was the Caesar cult more popular. The immediate occasion of the writing of Revelation may have been a Roman requirement that Christians should worship the emperor. The other evil force was the Asiatic Jews who refused the teachings of the gospel, and were jealous of the growth of the Christian church. From this class there arose what was called the synagogue of Satan.

Although the letters to the seven churches, like the whole book, were first of all "A Tract for the Times" written to meet the need in Asia Minor near the end of the first century, yet they were in their ultimate purpose meant for the whole Christian church down thru the ages. The seven churches represent co-existing conditions, and are typical of the church as a whole. Even though the historical background has changed, a survey of the seven churches reveals conditions which picture largely the church of Jesus Christ in every age, and the messages to them from the Risen Lord are most timely and necessary for the Christian church of the twentieth century.

In order to successfully meet any impending crisis the first concern of the church should be its own spiritual state, its fidelity to all required now by the Head of the church. Her best preparation for the future is faithfulness in the tasks of this day. Likewise in the study of a book, a dominant theme of which is the doctrine of the last things, what better preparation could be given us following the vision of the Risen Christ than a survey of our own spiritual state, attended by obedience to the message of the Living Christ in the light of the conditions revealed. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

Before taking up the message to each church which will be considered very briefly, let us note that there has been much speculation as to the meaning of the angel of the church. For practical purposes perhaps the following view will be of help to us in the study of the whole book, namely, that "in the Apocalypse the angel of any person or thing expresses that person or thing in action."

The first letter is addressed to the mother church at Ephesus. This city, while being the seat of the provincial government, and a center for commerce and education, was preeminent as a religious center, since here was located the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The church here had been founded by Paul, carried on by Timothy, who according to tradition was followed by the apostle John. This letter is embodied in a form largely common to each of the seven. There are the author's description of himself, his affirmation that he knows the conditions of the church, followed by warning or rebuke or praise or encouragement, a general exhortation, and a promise.

The author introduces himself as one who protects the churches, holding them in his hand, and who guards them, walking in their midst. He gives to the Ephesian church its just praise for its toil, patience, intolerance and hatred of evil, and steadfastness. In keeping with Paul's prophecy to the Ephesian elders at Miletus that after his departure grievous wolves would enter the flock, there had come false teachers who had tried the patience of the Christians. Although they had been patient and had not grown weary, there was this against them, that they had left their first love, at least the love of the first days. At the time of Paul's ministry in Ephesus we are told that mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed, and in his letter to them he speaks of the love they showed towards all the saints. Now, for some reason, this love was waning. Some suggest that it was shown by a comparative indifference to the necessities of the poorer brethren. When a church today fails to provide adequately for benevolent work is it a correct inference that she is leaving her first love, and that

unless she measures up in this respect there will come a special visitation of her Lord, and her opportunity will be taken away from her?

To a church under such circumstances the Risen Lord has a constructive message in which are found three words especially characteristic of the author and of his messages as recorded in this book. The first word is repent. The Master began his earthly ministry in Galilee with the message, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Now the Risen Lord in His last message to the churches repeats His call to repentance, "Repent, therefore, or else I come to thee quickly." The second characteristic word which sounds the very keynote of Revelation is overcome. In every case the promise is to him that overcometh. It has been well said that, "The book of Revelation is a record and a prophecy of victories won by Christ and the Church." While the dominant note in Paul's writings is faith, in the Revelation of John it is victory, or faith in the light of victory. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The third word of the message is another great gospel word, give. "I will give" is a continual refrain in the messages of Christ to His churches. As the ascended Lord with His heart full of love stretches out His hands to us, those hands once pierced for our sins, they are now overflowing with gifts to him that overcometh. Joy unspeakable and full of glory is not too great a gift for the Ephesian Christian, nor for all redeemed saints, as they shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Smyrna, the second church addressed, was located in a beautiful city where the population was largely absorbed in business, pleasure, public games, and where both Jewish and pagan opposition to Christianity

must have been very strong. With such corrupt surroundings and in the midst of severe persecutions and poverty, and threatened with additional sufferings and perhaps death, this little church receives from Jesus Christ risen from the dead no word of censure, but on the other hand encouragement and promise. We are told by the secular historian that the poverty of the Christians here was probably aggravated by the pillage of their property by a Jewish or a pagan mob. Here was the home of that early Christian martyr, Polycarp, in whose martyrdom the Jews no doubt had a leading part. We see here, then, on the one hand a poor, suffering church, but a church rich in faith, steadfast and trustworthy, sustained and encouraged by Him who for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might become rich, who suffered death for us, conquered death, lives again, and must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.

On the other hand there is mentioned here for the first time in Revelation a character who is most prominent and active all through, that one who on the field of history is walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, while at the same time our victorious King patrols the ground, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. At Smyrna we see Satan, assisted by his agents bringing distress upon the Christians and purposing to prolong their agony. Here, as in all scripture, he is presented as a real, personal being, who has a limited power known to God. As we continue our study we shall see more of the character, activity, and ultimate doom of Satan. In tribulation, poverty, blasphemy, prospect of suffering, imprisonment, the wiles of Satan, death—in all these things we are "more than conquerors thru him that loved us."

The city of Pergamum had the record for religious pre-eminence because it was here that the first temple in Asia was erected to Augustus, and here that the Emperor cult had its chief seat. In addressing the church at this place the victorious Warrior who has the two-edged sword recognized its location as the place where Satan is enthroned—even his dwelling place. For a little church in such an environment to hold fast to the name of Christ and not deny the faith even in the presence of death, called forth due recognition by the Head of the Church. Whenever a church in the providence of God is located in a very stronghold of Satan and still remains steadfast and loyal, such a church may appropriate for itself the approval and commendation such as were given the church at Pergamum, which was the very residence of Satan.

But along with the encouragement there comes a timely warning. The church that had successfully resisted the emperor worship was not equally strong in its attitude towards heresy from within. This church was held to account for the fact that there were some among them who held to the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Balaam loved "the hire of wrong doing" and from his teaching came idolatry and fornication. The Nicolaitan party probably had a similar teaching, and perhaps taught that the Christians could remain in the pagan clubs without being disloyal to their faith. Such undue tolerance of evil must inevitably bring censure upon the church and need for repentance. The tendency to compromise with evil and tolerate paganism within the church threaten the church today just as they did the church of Pergamum in the first century. Unless there is a genuine repentance and a real separation between the church and paganism there will come quickly the divine Warrior with the sword of his mouth. In contrast to the earthly pleasure of the pagan feasts, there is offered to the

conqueror the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name, which are suggestive of the bread of heaven and the new life and relation which due to divine favor and grace shall bring to the redeemed fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

The city of Thyatira—the home of Lydia, the first convert in Europe, had as an outstanding feature its trade guilds. We are told that the members of these guilds met together from time to time at a common meal which was of a sacrificial character. And the question naturally arose as to whether or not a Christian could partake of such a feast without compromising or surrendering his religion. Hence the question was closely related to the one just considered, namely, the tolerance of evil. To a church under such conditions the Divine Author, all-wise and all-powerful, first addresses words of liberal praise, making mention of their love, faith, ministry, patience, and in contrast to Ephesus, their progress. Then addressing the particular situation he is unmistakable in his denunciation of the tolerance in their midst of the wicked prophetess, Jezebel. In character she must have resembled the woman of Old Testament history whose name she bore. As a result of her teaching and seduction some of the Christians had been led to partake of her idolatry and fornication. Consistent with Christ's attitude of severe intolerance towards this sin was his longsuffering and love towards the sinners, as is shown in his giving to both her and them a place for repentance, and his justice in the punishment of the impenitent. To him that overcomes and keeps to the end Christ's works in contrast to the works of Jezebel there comes the twofold promise of power over the nations, and—if this interpretation of morning star be correct—possession of Christ himself.

This letter is especially rich as a character study of its Author, revealing as it does his divinity, omniscience, omnipotence, holiness,

longsuffering, patience, justice, generosity, love.

Sardis was an old pagan city with the traditions of eight centuries. It had been captured by Cyrus in a night attack at an unguarded point. Because of this historical incident the church must have received with added understanding Christ's command to them to be watchful lest he come stealthily. As a whole the church at Sardis held "A form of godliness, but denied the power thereof." "Thou hast a name that livest, and thou art dead." On the standard of excellence it had reached one hundred percent on not a single point. Its works were deficient—no works perfected before God. It was an inactive church. Its spiritual deadness must have resulted in moral pollution. To such a church from the Living Christ, who has the Living Spirit of God and holds in his grasp the church of the Living God, the call comes to watchfulness, steadfastness, repentance, remembrance, faithfulness; watchfulness, lest Christ come stealthily; steadfastness such as is always particularly needed by Christian churches planted in the heart of heathenism; remembrance of former blessings; faithfulness as stewards of what they had received and heard; repentance as the fundamental need of an unfruitful, dead church.

Yet, as is so often the case in a dead church, there are found a few who are worthy, who have not defiled their garments. To such are given the glorious privilege of walking in white garments with the Risen Christ. In this connection the promise to him that overcomes is threefold: First, adornment in white garments meaning, "a life free from pollution, bright with celestial gladness, crowned with final victory"; second, the name continued upon the book of life—that divine

register referred to by Moses (Ex. 32:32), by Malachi (Mal. 3:16), by Paul (Phil. 4:3), and by John a number of times in the Revelation; third, the promise includes open acknowledgement and acquittal before the court of Heaven.

Turning from the dead church at Sardis the next church addressed is the missionary church at Philadelphia. The One who is holy and true, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, having the key to the house of David and having already unlocked the door—this One voices no censure, but on the other hand has only unreserved praise for this missionary church. According to Ramsey, Philadelphia was a missionary city, the founder having purposed to make it a center of Graeco-Asiatic civilization, and to spread Greek language and manners. Hence it was indeed the city of the open door. In like manner here is a church with the open door set before it bringing missionary opportunity. It is a church with power and loyalty to Jesus Christ, and loved of him. It was to be their privilege to see something of the submission of the members of the synagogue of Satan to the true Israel of God, perhaps an answer to the prophecy in Isaiah (45:14) that the Gentiles would fall down unto Israel and make supplication saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. To this church was also given the assurance of safe-keeping in the hour of trial, the primary reference probably being to the troublesome times which may precede the advent of Christ. To a church with such opportunity and privilege there comes the added responsibility to continue its good work expressed to it in the words of Christ, "Hold fast that which thou hast that no one take thy crown."

In the promise here addressed to him that overcometh there are two most suggestive figures of speech. The first one is pillar. A pillar firmly and permanently placed gives support to a building, and remains fixed as long as the house stands. Such is the position in the temple of God which Christ gives to the conqueror. The second figure of speech is that of name. There will also be given the name of God, the name of the city of God, and the new name of Christ himself, consecration to the service of God, citizenship in the kingdom of God, crowned with the character of Christ himself. Thus to the church with missionary opportunity there are inseparably connected privilege and responsibility, both of which are vividly suggested by the words pillar and name.

In striking contrast to the unqualified praise of the missionary church there next comes the unreserved censure of the lukewarm church. Historians tell us that the city of Laodicea—the home of the Christian without enthusiasm, was prosperous in banking and trading. A famous wool, and an eye salve of marked value as a medicine were two commodities characteristic of the community. The prosperity and spirit of independence of the citizens are shown in the fact that after the earthquake of A.D. 60 they refused imperial help for rebuilding their city. The spirit of self-sufficiency had possessed the church and the members were in absolute ignorance of their wretched, miserable spiritual condition. It has been truly said that a "blind beggar barely clad is not more deserving of pity than such a church." Someone has pointed out the fact that no word is given us of any severe trial that this church ever had, and that this might have had a significant bearing upon its terrible spiritual condition.

Whereas this lukewarmness was most nauseous to the great Head of the Church, such were his compassion and love for these self-satisfied ignorant Christians that to them he gives a most wise counsel, a most loving invitation, and a most glorious promise. Such people need to buy from him "at the cost of personal ease or self-esteem" a living faith, an unspotted life, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. To them is extended the offer of a heavenly friendship and a heavenly bounty. We see here that in the midst of wrath mercy is remembered, and in the midst of reproof and chastisement love is the dominant note. What a glorious picture this is of the heart of our Risen Lord. Yet even more than this comes the climax of the promises to him that overcometh. The ascended Redeemer actually offers to share with the redeemed His honor and dominion in glory. "He that overcometh I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne."

As in the days of John, so in our day, the Risen Christ is walking in the midst of the churches. Nothing escapes his eye of flame. "All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." At the same time there is not one of his children who escapes his heart of love and his hand of power. "For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

SURVEYING THE COURT OF HEAVEN

"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me." John 14:1.

Thus far in the book we have had a vision of the Risen Christ walking in the midst of his churches surveying their conditions, sustaining and supporting them, showing his church that her first concern must be her own present spiritual state and her faithfulness to the commands of the Lord, before she could be prepared for the unfolding of the future; "the things that are," then "the things which must come to pass hereafter."

Before presenting the revelation of the conflict and suffering thru which the church must inevitably pass, the Divine Author sees that there must be given to his church further encouragement and cheer in preparation for what is to follow. Hence we are given in chapters four and five a survey of the court of heaven. In this vision we see "the foundation and assurance of all that follows—God enthroned over all in eternal majesty and power giving over the book of his will to Christ the revealer and fulfiller." Whereas in chapter one we saw the Risen Christ in majesty and power, in chapter five we see Him more as the ascended Christ in all his redemptive power and glory. Dr. Milligan suggests in this connection that to the church facing struggles and persecutions the ascended Christ in these two chapters comforts and encourages his own with a message similar in purport to the one he delivered to his disciples when he said, "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me."

In the letter to the church at Philadelphia we saw the open door of opportunity presented. In that matchless invitation of chapter three,

verse twenty, the Risen Christ is seen standing and knocking at the door of the human heart, calling for it to be opened. In this fourth chapter there is a third door, "the door of revelation." "After these things I saw, and behold a door opened in heaven." Before looking in at this open door for a glimpse of such heavenly things, it is evident that John needed to ascend to a height such as he had not thus far attained. The trumpet-sounding voice called to him, "Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter." It is evident that straightway, by the power of the Holy Spirit, John was transported to higher ground, to heaven's table-land, to the height by the side of the door of heaven where the angel stands. May the Holy Spirit so lift us up that we along with John may see thru this open door something of the glories of heaven, and in anticipation the complete victory that awaits the church of the living God.

Looking thru the open door of heaven the first glorious sight is the very throne of God, and him who is sitting upon it. He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardius. Jasper is as clear as crystal, therefore suggestive of the holiness of God, that unifying attribute which is fundamental in His character and unifies all His other attributes. Sardius is red in color, and may here be symbolical of the justice of God as revealed in judgment. Then there is a rainbow around the throne like an emerald to look upon. This halo of green gives tone to the picture and may represent the mercy of God, while the very word rainbow reminds us of God's ancient covenant given in mercy.

Beyond the rainbow of emerald there appears a second circle of twenty-four thrones, upon which are sitting twenty-four elders arrayed in white garments, and on their heads crowns of gold. These elders

probably represent "the Church in its totality, but the church idealized—a state yet future but already potentially realized in the resurrection and ascension of the Head." (Swete). In the picture there is also symbolized by the thunderstorm divine power and glory, and by the seven torches blazing continually before the throne the Holy Spirit of God. The splendor and suggestiveness of the picture are enriched by the sea of glass like unto crystal before the throne.

The next objects in this heavenly scene to arrest the attention are the four living creatures in the midst of the throne and round about it. They appear to be the representatives of nature, but nature reconciled, "delivered from the bondage of corruption." Such characteristics as the perpetual vigilance and ceaseless activity of nature are outstanding. The energies of nature by the power of God are devoted to a ceaseless praise of Him who sitteth upon the throne. "They have no rest day and night saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.' " Hence the ceaseless occupation in glory of the four living creatures, the representatives of nature reconciled, is praise to the holy, powerful, eternal God "who is to come" in fulfillment of the "earnest expectation of creation."

But not only are the four living creatures thus continually in the temple of heaven blessing God, but the twenty-four elders also worship simultaneously. Whenever the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to God, the twenty-four elders shall fall down before Him in worship and homage. Nature and the Church are thus coordinated in worship. The beginning of Nature's praise to God is as "a signal for the Church to fall upon its knees before the throne." We are told that in the early church much was made of the concurrence in worship of Nature

and the Church. Appropriate indeed is the suggestion of our modern commentator, Swete, that if such was the case in the early church how much more should it be emphasized in our day in the light of the phenomenal invention and discoveries in nature, revealing as they do more and more of the marvelous power and glory of the Creator. Every new discovery in the physical world today constitutes a call to God's people to renewed ascription of glory, honor, and power to our Lord and our God, the Creator of all, and should call us to a more complete acknowledgement of the divine truth that all the victory and glory is due only to the power and grace of Him who alone is worthy.

"Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore Thee,
 Casting down their golden crowns around the
 glassy sea,
 Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
 Who wert and art and evermore shall be."

As the prophet continues to behold thru the door opened in heaven the glories contained therein, the next object to come into view is the book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals, and held in the right hand of the enthroned God. This book has been variously called "the book of destiny" or the "book of the decrees of God," or the "book of God's plan and purpose." The problem at the court of heaven was to find someone who was worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof. The call for one worthy was addressed to the whole creation, but there was no response. No one was found worthy to open the book or to look thereon. In a strikingly dramatic way there is here revealed a fundamental truth, namely, that neither creation nor any created being can save itself, and the inability implied is moral

incapacity. No mere man can save himself, can reach back and undo what has been done, can change his nature, and cleanse his own sinful heart. Hence the necessity of the atonement. In the presence of the manifest inability of all created things as displayed in this drama in heaven John was moved to grief. This is suggestive of the untold human grief in the world today because of insufficient saving knowledge of the One who is mighty to save. Yet such grief is unnecessary. The announcement from heaven is, "Weep not; behold the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof." Yet when looking for a lion there is seen in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and the elders, a Lamb standing. Instead of majesty is meekness. At the center of the picture is the Lamb which had been slain. Behold the Lamb of God—spotless, sacrificial, sovereign. "And he came and hath taken the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." The book of God's plan and purpose is revealed and executed by the Lamb. It is not surprising that when He had taken the book, both the representatives of Creation and of the Church fall down before the Lamb, and praises and prayers ascend to the throne.

In the wonderful praises ascribed to God the Creator in chapter four, there is no mention of accompanying music. The music of heaven, the harps and the voices, are all reserved to join in ascribing praises to the Lamb, the Redeemer. In this new song of redemption there are proclaimed the worthiness of the Lamb and the work of the Lamb. He is the One worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof because of the fact of His sacrifice, the central fact of all Christianity. Thru His sacrificial work by the blood of the cross He purchased unto God,

for the service of God, men of every tribe and tongue, and people and nation. Not only did He purchase redemption for the people, but also effected the royal priesthood of all believers. "And they reign upon earth." Although the consummation of this reign of the saints is yet future, it is begun in the present life. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

But there is still more to be seen and heard in heaven. Following the song of redemption there is seen a circle of myriads of angels, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. These heavenly beings who desire to know thru the church of the many colored wisdom of God in the salvation of sinful men, who rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, do not fail to recognize "both the grandeur of the Lamb's sacrificial act and its infinite merit." Hence we have a complete doxology in the acclamation of the angelic hosts that the Lamb that hath been slain is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory, blessing.

Even the representatives of Creation and of the Church and the myriads of angels do not exhaust the praises that ascend to the enthroned God and to the Lamb in the midst of the throne. The purpose of the whole created universe is to glorify God and the Lamb. The whole creation, therefore, not merely its representatives, but every created thing, in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea and all things that are in them are heard by John as they join in the universal doxology to God and to the Lamb. "Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory and the dominion forever and ever." To this grand doxology of all creation the representatives of Nature reconciled respond with

Amen, and the representatives of the Church idealized fall down and worship.

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

CONFLICT, PRESERVATION, GLORY

"In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." John 16:33b.

The movement of chapter five has shown us first, the expression of a need, someone needed to open the book of God's plan and purpose; second, the revelation of a Person to meet that need, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the slain Lamb in the midst of the throne; third, universal recognition and praise of Him who thru suffering and sacrifice has gained the victory, and is the One alone worthy to open the book and loose the seals thereof.

With the opening of the seals we see something of God's plan and purpose in history as revealed and executed by the Lamb, and as carried out by the various agencies of God. The drama of chapters six and seven seems to traverse the tire age of the Christian dispensation, presenting not successive periods in the history of the church, but the age-long conflict, preservation and glory of the church. In chapter six we see primarily conflict and struggle, whereas in chapter seven we have in a wonderful twofold vision the preservation and glory of the saints. Crystallizing the two chapters into a single statement, we can appropriate the very words of Christ himself as He while here upon earth said to His distressed disciples, "In the world ye have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The openings of the first four seals have several things in common, thus forming a series. In connection with each opening there are the voice of the representative of Creation saying, Come; the appearance of horse and rider, and the explanations following. In the utterance as with a voice of thunder saying, "Come," there is sounded a major note

which runs all thru the book of Revelation, extending from the greeting of him "who is to come" in chapter one to the "Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus." of the closing chapter. As it is sounded by one of the four living creatures at the opening of each of the first four seals of the scroll it may picture the idea of the apostle Paul of the earnest expectation of creation, its longing to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

The imagery of the four horses may have been drawn to some extent from the book of Zechariah, and here modified for the author's particular purpose. In Zechariah's vision the four horses are the four winds of heaven, their mission being to execute judgment upon Babylon, Egypt and other ancient nations.

Interpretations vary as to the meaning of the white horse and rider appearing at the opening of the first seal. One view is that they represent triumphant militarism and lust of conquest of the world empire. Yet the idea of warfare is embodied in the second figure, and such a repetition is improbable. The opposite view which is probably more generally accepted is that there is here a picture of the victorious progress of the gospel thru the centuries. The very purpose of the gospel is to make fresh conquests, conquering and to conquer. The genius of Christianity is progress, its watchword, forward. The incentive of Christian missions is the glorious fact that "The cross of Jesus is going on before." The church that follows truly its great Head has no place in its program for retreat and retrenchment. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come."

Yet marching thru all the centuries are other parallel forces opposite in design and effect. One is war as symbolized by the blood-red horse with the rider who is given the power to take peace from the earth, and that they should slaughter one another, and who for the accomplishment of this purpose is given a sword, here not a symbol of justice, but of bloodshed. "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

A third horse traversing the entire age is black in color. Its rider had a balance in his hand, thus symbolizing famine as one of the agencies of providence. "There shall be famines." The voice in the midst of the representatives of creation, with its utterance suggestive of great scarcity, seems also to suggest that even in the midst of the horrors of famine there must be a provision made for the saints.

At the opening of the fourth seal there appear the pale horse and its rider, Death, and his travelling companion, Hades. In this wake follow the unusual visitations of war, famine, pestilence, and destruction by wild beasts. To the power of these destructive forces there is set a limit—authority over the fourth part of the earth. Here is another suggestion of provision being made for the preservation of the saints. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."

At the opening of the fifth seal we behold no more the figure of a horse and rider, but on the other hand the sacrificed lives of the saints crying out for judgment upon a wicked world. As ideally conceived there is not here a desire on the part of the saints for personal revenge upon their murderers, but a longing to see the retributive justice of a holy God exercised in the punishment of sin. The spirit of their prayer is evidently embodied in the Anglican Order for the burial of the dead as the petition reads, "that it may please Thee—shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect and to hasten Thy

kingdom." God will truly avenge His elect who cry to Him day and night. He stands ready to avenge them speedily, at the same time He must be longsuffering, waiting until the time is ripe, just as the husbandmen waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth. (Luke 18:7 and James 5:7). The present condition of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held is that of honor, rest, and of short duration. The reason for the delay is that the number of the redeemed may be completed. "And these all, having had witness borne to them thru their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."

"Yet saints their watch are keeping
 Their cry goes up, How long?
 And soon the night of weeping,
 Shall be the morn of song."

With the opening of the first five seals the picture given is largely that of the world and the church. The opening of the sixth seal sets forth great upheavals and catastrophes in the world of nature, cosmical disturbances which herald the approach of the end. These are sometimes interpreted as referring to racial and social revolutions, or a period of collapse or decay of society in general. Here the imagery used is largely such as is found in the prophecy of Joel and the "Little Apocalypse" of Mark's gospel. The judgment that comes in the wake of all these phenomena includes every rank and condition of society, from the king on the throne to the bondman enslaved in the house of his lord. The cry for vengeance as voiced at the opening of the fifth seal seems to have already been heard and answered by the One about whom scripture not only says, "God is love," but also "Our God

is a consuming fire." And there is the desire on the part of all who are subject to this fearful judgment not only to be hidden from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, but also from the wrath of the Lamb. When here upon earth the Lamb of God on one occasion particularly showed that quality of righteous indignation in his character. It was when He looked round about upon the Pharisees "with anger," being grieved at the hardening of their heart. In the great day of their wrath, not only the presence of God, but also that which is as equally impossible for the impenitent sinner to face, namely, the wrath of the Lamb, will so reveal and condemn the objects of Divine wrath that they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us." So awful and so complete is this judgment and so universal is the sinfulness of man, that the natural question follows: In the great day of Divine wrath who is able to stand? Such is the question raised at the close of chapter six, but alas, the curtain falls without an answer, darkness and doom, without a ray of light and hope. Thank God for the following scene.

Whereas chapter six closed with a picture of the panic and distress of the impenitent, unprepared world in the presence of divine wrath, the next chapter gives us by way of contrast a picture of the preservation and safeguarding of the true Israel of God in the midst of the judgments upon a wicked world, and following this, by way of anticipation, a vision of the church in its glorified state, triumphant and at rest. Dr. William Hoge Marquess has suggested a most appropriate scripture text as a summary of the chapter, namely, the words of Second Timothy 4:18-- "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and save me unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." The deliverance of the church from every evil work is the central thought of

the first vision of chapter seven. The angels of the winds are called upon to restrain the fury of the elements until the servants of God have been sealed by the seal of the living God. The purpose of the seal, or the signet ring, of the Oriental monarch is "to give validity to official documents or to mark his property." In like manner those who are sealed by the seal of the living God are marked as his own, and are thus to be safeguarded, and enabled to stand even in the presence of him who sitteth upon the throne and before the wrath of the Lamb. The number of those who are thus sealed is made up of the representatives of the various tribes of the children of Israel, no doubt intending to set forth the church of God in its totality. Upon the Israel of God, as many as walk according to the principle of the cross of Christ there descend the blessings of mercy and peace, even though the earth does change, and though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas.

Such a message of comfort as this was peculiarly appropriate for the Christian church at the close of the first century as it was destined to face terrible calamities. At the same time this is a message needed by the church in every age as it faces the problems and perils of an evil world. As the true servants of God were sealed in the times of the early persecutions of the church, so are they sealed in the midst of the colossal upheavals and anti-Christian propaganda in the Orient today, and safeguarded in the midst of the perils of the refined paganism of the Occident.

In the terrible Japan earthquake of 1923 there were hundreds of Christian missionaries in the city of Tokyo and vicinity where the loss of life was greatest. Yet the life of only one missionary was lost, and in dying she left a witness which perhaps counted for more than if she

had lived on for a long period of years. The remarkable preservation of Christian missionaries during the world wars and the special providence that protects the representatives of the cross continually as they face the disease and the unhealthful climate of foreign lands, and many times the hostility of a strange people with a strange language; all these things are a constant reminder of the glorious truth that the servants of our God are marked with His seal.

Practical and comforting as is the message of this vision, there is, if possible, a still more precious and glorious message awaiting us in the parallel vision of the second part of the chapter—that wondrous picture of the countless multitudes of redeemed souls before the throne of God. Just as one purpose of the transfiguration was to prepare the disciples for the experiences of Calvary soon to follow, so one purpose of this vision of glory was to prepare the church for the cross which she must inevitably bear. We see in this vision the redeemed church of God saved unto His heavenly kingdom, giving glory unto God and unto the Lamb. Sometimes to us the church of the living God may seem to be small, its progress in the evangelization of the nations slow, its position in the world low, its power weak. Then let us look up at this picture of the church triumphant, a multitude innumerable and universal, standing before the throne of God and the Lamb clothed in white robes, the rewards given to them that overcome. See them with palms in their hands, the emblems of joy and triumph which were used at the great Jewish feasts of the tabernacles, and which heralded the Messianic king on His triumphal entry. Then let us listen to their cry with a great voice, in the harmony of one language, as they say, "Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb." Then there are the multitudes of the

heavenly hosts falling down, worshipping, and in a sevenfold acclamation giving endorsement to the heavenly praises. Then, finally, let us listen to one of the elders as he introduces the white robed throng.

"These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." These are the church of God divinely delivered, cleansed, redeemed, honored, glorified, satisfied, shepherded, guided, comforted. In the center of the tableau in the midst of the throne is the Lamb of God, our Shepherd and Guide, not only for the present, but also for all eternity. It has been His blood that has made the whole scene possible, not only possible, but a glorious certainty and reality. Said Dr.

Stuart Robinson: "All hope of divine favor—all strength to resist and conquer sin—all power of a holy life comes from the blood. Is man redeemed? It is because 'we have redemption thru his blood.' Are any ransomed from sin? 'Not by corruptible ransom of silver and gold' are they purchased, 'But by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot.' Are these justified? 'Being justified by his blood.' Are these cleansed and made holy? 'His blood cleanseth from all sin.' Are they, as strangers and wanderers from God, restored? 'Ye who sometime were afar off are now made nigh by the blood of Christ.' Have they access to the Father's presence in prayer? It is because the High Priest hath gone before 'sprinkling the blood.' Are they arrayed in spotless

robes to appear at the court of the Great King? 'They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Are sinners cast off at last to eternal death? It is because 'they have trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God.'

"Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

WARNING AND WITNESSING

"Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17b.
"And ye shall be my witnesses." Acts 1:8b.

At the conclusion of chapter seven we had our eyes fixed upon the slain Lamb, now sovereign in the midst of the throne of God, where he is the eternal Shepherd and Guide of his people. At the beginning of chapter eight this Lamb continues to reveal and execute God's plans and purposes by the opening of the seventh seal for which the twofold vision of preservation and glory of the last chapter had been preparatory.

At the opening of the seventh seal there is a dramatic surprise, namely, a silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. This may mean that there was a cessation of lightnings and voices and thunders, a pause or suspense, as in a state of expectation between two acts of a drama. "Preparation for action, rather than action, marks as yet the opening of the seventh seal." The seven angels with the seven trumpets immediately appear, followed by the prayers of the saints, all of which is preparatory for what is to follow.

There are a number of views as to the place of the seven trumpets in the structure and plan of the book. The first is that they may begin a new series of events after the event of the seals; the second, that they may start afresh from the beginning and cover the whole period to the end; the third, that the trumpets may be the superlative of the sixth seal in detail. A. B. Davidson sets forth the view that the seventh seal develops into the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet into the seven bowls, comparable to a telescope in three sections. When closed it represents the seven seals. If a section is drawn out

that represents the seven trumpets, and then the third section, when drawn out of this in its turn represents the seven bowls. It appears probable that the trumpets start afresh from the beginning and traverse the entire age to the end.

It is apparent that the trumpets are of the nature of "warnings of coming danger, and a call to repentance." They remind us of the theme of John the Baptist as he preached in the wilderness, of Jesus as he began his Galilean ministry, of the twelve disciples as they were sent forth to preach, the refrain of each being, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

At the soundings of the first four trumpets nature is directly affected, and man only secondarily, while the last three trumpets heralding the three great woes bring direct judgment upon mankind. The imagery used in the trumpet series is in many instances very similar to that descriptive of the plagues in Egypt in the time of Moses. The effect of the first trumpet sound is a partial visitation of judgment upon the land. Since the time of our first parents in Eden the beauty of primeval nature has been to some extent marred by the course of sin, and thorns have infested the ground. The second trumpet sound reveals a similar visitation of judgment upon the sea; the third upon the bodies of fresh water; the fourth upon the heavenly bodies. The climatic force of the series is seen in the fact that the fifth visitation is preceded by the eagle herald with a great voice crying, "Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound."

The visitations of judgment which follow the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets are most dreadful in the extreme. The one gives a vision of the fiendish locusts that torment but do not kill

mankind; the other is a vision of the fiendish horses by which men are both tormented and killed. In the one the star fallen from heaven is evidently Satan, who has the key and opens the pit of the abyss out of which comes forth the smoke as the smoke of a great furnace. From this smoke which darkened the sun and the air there issue forth fiendish locusts with scorpion power to attack and torment mankind. They have a most hideous appearance--the shape of a horse, the face of a human, long hair like a woman, teeth like the lion's, breastplates of iron. The sound of their wings are as war chariots. They have the sting of the scorpion in their tails. Their king is the angel of the abyss, the Destroyer. In this highly symbolical picture of the forces of spiritual evil at work in the world we see thru it all the personality of Satan busy in his hellish work. Yet his power is under the control of God, is limited to a certain class, and to a certain time known to God. Like the Israelites who had the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts of their homes in Egypt, so those who had the seal of God on their foreheads were not hurt by the plague of the fiendish locusts. Then, too, those that remained were not to be killed but tortured for five months. The note sounded seems to be that of warning leaving opportunity to repent, rather than the note of final doom later to be sounded when men are finally impenitent.

When the sixth trumpet is sounded there is heard again the prayers of the saints such as were heard prior to the beginning of the trumpet series and at the opening of the sixth seal. Here, as in the preceding instances, the burden of the prayers is that the righteousness of God be vindicated in judgment upon evil. The four angels of God's wrath who had been restrained for a time are loosed to execute destruction upon the third part of mankind at the exact time appointed of God. In

this connection there appear a vast number of fiendish horses with heads as lions, and out of their mouths come forth fire, smoke, and brimstone. Their tails are as serpent's heads in which is found the deadly poison. The riders have breastplates as of fire, and of hyacinth, and brimstone. The terrible plague which they bring results in the destruction of one third of mankind. Terrible as are the torture and destruction as a result of these plagues, the rest of mankind who escape at this time do not take warning, and consequently do not repent of their idolatry and the immoral life which naturally follows false worship. This second woe, which increases in intensity and fatality that which has preceded, emphasizes anew "the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." Surely a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah is needed "to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest the Lord come and smite the earth with a curse." Such a witnessing to the truth is found in the next two chapters.

Just as the opening of the seventh seal was preceded by preparatory visions of the preservation and glory of the church so in chapters ten and eleven there is given a preparation for the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Before the last note of warning with its call to repentance, there is in the plan of a gracious God a renewed emphasis upon witness-bearing, hence the central thought of the two preparatory chapters before us might be expressed in the words of the Risen Christ to his disciples as He said, "Ye shall be my witnesses."

The strong angel from heaven who appears at the opening of the scene, in many respects resembles the "one like unto a son of man" in chapter one. He brings both a written and a spoken message which taken together give us a clue to the meaning of the chapter. The written message is contained in the little book, which, in contrast to the book

of chapter five, is both little and open. It may have contained "a fragment of the great purpose which was in the hand of God a fragment ripe for revelation." Responding to the signal of the great voice of the angel came the utterances of the seven thunders. Their utterances were as "unspeakable words, unlawful to utter." Then comes the verbal message from the big, strong angel. By a solemn oath he declares that there shall be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants, the prophets." This mystery, this secret purpose of God according to the good tidings, had been revealed unto his servants, the prophets. They had been chosen to speak forth the divine message. In obedience to the voice from heaven, and the instruction of the angel, John took the little book out of the angel's hands, and ate it up. Here is no doubt symbolically represented the reception of the book of prophecy, and in what follows the twofold effect produced by it. Its message is both pleasant to the taste and bitter when digested. It carries with it not only mercy, but also judgment. And the heavenly messengers say unto John, "Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." Regarding the ministry of John we are therefore taught that it is prophetic in character, and in its scope must concern all nations. The true prophet of God has the world for his parish, "Jerusalem, all Judaea and Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth."

Continuing this same idea of witnessing to the truth it is evident that chapter eleven is also to be interpreted symbolically or spiritually. Although we cannot be sure of the exact meaning of all the

symbols, yet the practical messages may be more easily set forth. The scene which presents the measuring of the temple, if interpreted in the light of Zechariah, second chapter, suggests anew the comforting truth that the true church of God will be preserved in the midst of the general overthrow of the wicked. "For I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her." Zech. 2:5. Just as in a previous vision the true Israel of God was sealed with the seal of the living God, so again here He is shown to be their refuge and strength so that even in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation the people of God may continue to be "as lights holding forth the word of life."

The duration of this dispensation of the church is suggested by the expression "forty and two months," or three and one half years, or twelve hundred and sixty days. Historically there may be a reference to the time, times and half a time of Daniel, which in turn may refer to the suffering of the Jews under Antiochus. In Revelation it is the period during which the holy city is being trodden under foot, the two witnesses are prophesying, the woman is being protected in the wilderness, the beast is exercising his destructive power in the world, and to a certain extent the Gentiles are triumphing. This period of time may refer to the whole period of the Christian age, a period unknown to us, but definitely known and fixed by our heavenly Father. During this period the primary mission of the church is witness-bearing. The two special witnesses mentioned in this chapter apparently have reference to Moses and Elijah as representatives of the church during the age of the law and the prophets, and as typical of the kind of witnesses the church must have on thru to the end of the Christian dispensation. As these witnesses are here presented, they are clothed in sackcloth, suggestive

of a spirit of humility and penitence such as should characterize the prophetic witness as long as sin is in the world and heathenism prevails. Also the secret of his success is the oil of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Such a witness endued with power from on high is immortal until his work is done. His enemies are slain by the sword of the Spirit. Witnesses with such a spirit and power are comparable to Elijah "who had power to shut up the heavens against the rain," or to Moses who commanded the plagues of Egypt. Even beyond this the prophets of the present age may do even greater things. "But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

Yet the witnesses of the church must come into mortal conflict with the forces of unrighteousness abroad in the world. We, therefore, have introduced in the heart of the eleventh chapter the figure of the beast that cometh up out of the abyss. His character, career, and final doom will be given consideration later in the book. We merely note here the fact of his appearance and the effect of his deadly work in connection with the witnesses to the truth. As a result of his war, conquest and murder, there follows a most gruesome scene which has been described as "the degenerate church inviting the world to celebrate a feast over the dead bodies of the witnesses of Christ, and the world accepting the invitation." Yet such a profane outrage and exultation of the forces of evil are short lived. There soon follows the breath of life from God, and the martyrs arise triumphant. Their resurrected glory shines forth to dazzle all who behold. In the presence of their enemies they ascend into the glory of heaven. In that hour there is a partial visitation of judgment upon the city while those who escape are affrighted and give glory to the God of heaven. We have, therefore,

as preparatory to the seventh trumpet sound a vision of preservation and glory of the saints in many respects similar to the visions preceding the opening of the seventh seal. In the present case a distinct emphasis is placed upon the church's function of witness-bearing.

With the sounding of the seventh trumpet comes the triumph of witnessing at the end of time. Whereas the opening of the seventh seal was followed by silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, when the seventh angel sounded the trumpet there were great voices in heaven who proclaimed, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." The empire of this world is now to be delivered into the hands of him whose it is both by inheritance and by conquest—"The nations his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth his possession." Hence in the climax of this chapter we are carried to the very verge of the consummation of the age. In response to the glorious proclamation of the great voices, who are probably the representatives of Creation, there come from the representatives of the church worship, in the form of adoration and thanksgiving to the Lord God Almighty.

Before the curtain falls on this magnificent scene, the conclusion of a great section of the Revelation, there is opened the sanctuary of God in heaven, and there is seen in his sanctuary the ark of his covenant, and there follow lightnings, and voices, and thunders and an earthquake and a great hail.

This great section had begun with a door opened in heaven, the door of revelation, thru which "the light of heaven fell on earthly tragedy." At the conclusion the inner door of the sanctuary in heaven stands open, that holy place out of which issues divine wrath and final doom upon the sinner who is finally impenitent. But inside this heavenly temple the

ark of his covenant in full view reminds us of the mercy of God which is "from everlasting to everlasting unto them that fear him." Then the symbols of His glory and power and judgment complete the scene which comprises the divine response to the proclamation of the great voices in heaven and the worship and thanksgiving of the four and twenty elders. All this heavenly scene is occasioned by the trumpet sound of the seventh angel when is finished the mystery of God according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants, the prophets. In anticipation we behold the perennial reign of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As we contemplate this magnificent picture, and as we listen to such a grand oratorio resounding with the music of heaven itself, let every true prophet sound out clearly the gospel refrain, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

THREE GREAT ENEMIES OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15

In the preceding study we saw something of the prophetic character and scope of the ministry of John. There the commission given him was, "Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." In the section we now have before us for consideration we see John in the process of fulfilling this prophetic mission. From chapter one thru eleven we have in general a view of the Lamb and His people. Beginning at chapter twelve we see more of the Lamb in relation to His enemies. It is a more complete unfolding of that first gospel promise as found in the words of Jehovah God to the serpent in Eden when He said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The first sign, or representation of spiritual truth, that appears in this heavenly vision is a woman arrayed in the heavenly bodies, and travailing in the pains of child-birth. Another sign in heaven brings into view a great red dragon, standing before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child. A study of the imagery of the whole chapter makes it apparent that the woman here described is a collective description or designation of the people of God wherever they are found. It is from the true Israel of God that the Messiah springs, and it is for His people that God has prepared a place and made provision during the period of their earthly

pilgrimage. This period of sojourn is definitely fixed, and is characterized by the persecution of the woman, and the struggles of the rest of her seed.

Along with the appearance of this woman, the mother of the Messiah, there is presented in detail a picture of the great red dragon, who is identified with the old serpent, that first great enemy of the Messiah and His people. Since a wise general makes a study of the character of his enemy, and particularly since we are enjoined in scripture to be sober and vigilant, for our adversary is as a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour, so we do well to study the character and methods of our great enemy, Satan, as they here by symbol and definition are so vividly portrayed.

We see him first as a great red dragon, which suggests power and malice and hurtfulness. "He was a murderer from the beginning and the father of murderers. Cain was of the evil one and slew his brother. In the symbolical picture his heads, diadems, horns, and the stars which he draws are suggestive of power, sovereignty, size, and strength. Although he is given certain authority in this world, being called more than once by the apostle John, "the prince of this world," yet he is a prince who has been judged, and in opposition to him and triumphant over him we have in the introduction to the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ, "the ruler of the kings of the earth." From the time of the first gospel in Eden he with murderous intent has been, so to speak, seeking to devour the Messiah. When in the fulness of time the Messiah did appear on earth his great enemy by renewed and continued and increased diabolical power tried in vain to devour him. In return the seed of the woman bruised his head and coming

out triumphant was caught up unto God and unto his throne.

The dragon thus wounded and frustrated in his hostile and deadly designs, does not give up his purpose, but carries the warfare into heaven itself. He is bold and blasphemous enough to enter the very sanctuary of heaven and attack the authority of the exalted Christ. He again meets defeat and is cast down from heaven. The wonderful progress of the gospel immediately following the ascension of Christ and his pouring out the Holy Spirit with Pentecostal power upon the apostolic church were a terrific blow to the power of the dragon. After being cast out of heaven his sphere becomes limited to the earth and the sea, until he is more signally defeated and is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where he will be tormented day and night forever and forever. In the account of his defeat and expulsion from heaven there are a number of names given him which throw further light upon his character. Here he is called the old serpent, suggestive of craft, malice, and ruinous influence, and he is thus definitely identified with the tempter of our first parents in the garden of Eden. Again he is called devil, meaning a secret or slanderous accuser. He is also Satan, meaning an opposer or adversary. Another name is that of deceiver, the deceiver of the whole world. Then he is called an accuser, here meaning an open, public accuser before a tribunal as over against his secret, slanderous accusations suggested by the word devil. When such a character as this was cast out of heaven it was the occasion of the acclamation of the great voice in heaven recognizing the saving and sovereign power of the Christ, giving the secret of the victory over Satan, calling upon heaven and all its inhabitants to rejoice, and bemoaning the curse upon the earth because the devil had gone down

unto them.

How was he actually defeated in heaven? How can such a formidable enemy as this be overcome? Verse eleven, the key-verse of the chapter, gives us the secret of the victory. "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony: and they loved not their life even unto death." First, and foremost, and indispensable in winning victory over Satan is the blood of the Lamb, the central fact of all Christianity. Then the word of testimony is a most powerful means of defeating the purposes of Satan, the method of Jesus in the wilderness temptation. The martyr spirit is also a mighty weapon with which to frustrate the evil one. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." "They loved not their life even unto death."

Although the first great enemy found no longer a place in heaven, and although his final destination is the abyss, for the present age he is to have the earth as the scene of his activity. Because of his crushing defeat in heaven he is all the more enraged, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. Since the Messiah, the special object of his rage, had ascended from the earth, his policy now is to attack him by persecuting the Mother of the Messiah. In so doing he in reality is persecuting the Messiah. The ascended Messiah had said to Saul of Tarsus as he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter upon the apostolic church, "Why persecutest thou me?"

The woman of the vision, in order to escape persecution, is pictured as fleeing on eagle's wings to the wilderness where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time from the face of the serpent. In like manner, God protects his people, nourishes them and preserves them in the day of trouble and persecution. As the writer beheld this

vision perhaps he was reminded of Israel in the solitude of the wilderness wanderings, as God said to them, "Ye have seen what I have done unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." As is always true of our great enemy he perseveres in his attacks. Hence he seeks to overwhelm this woman in the wilderness by causing her to be carried away by a great stream. Yet the protection of a gracious providence assures and comforts.

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of water shall not overflow."

Again baffled in his hellish designs upon the woman the dragon, waxing wroth, goes away to make war upon the rest of her seed, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus. At this point in the conflict the first great enemy seems to retire more to the background, choosing rather to prosecute the war by the use of his two great agents. While his destructive work continues unabated, and even increased, his tactics now are changed. He is more the power behind the throne while his two agents come to the forefront. In chapter twelve his hostility had been shown directly towards the Messiah and the mother of the Messiah. In chapter thirteen it is directed, by means of the two agents, upon the rest of her seed, or the saints who are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

The first beast had appeared in chapter eleven, where coming up out of the abyss, he had made war upon, overcome, and killed the two witnesses. Now he appears again, this time coming up out of the sea. His resemblance to the old dragon himself is most striking. His cruelty, brutishness and power are suggested by the symbols of the leopard, lion and bear, and there is the added significance that upon

his head are the names of blasphemy. The dragon entrusts him with his power, his throne, and great authority.

When we recall that in the latter part of the first century, at the time of the writing of this book, the Roman Emperors were using divine titles, and in general were most hostile to the cause of Christianity, it is natural to look upon this beast as the embodiment of that world power in opposition to the church of Christ. "Two empires were about to meet in mortal combat: the kingdom of God represented by the church, the world power represented by Rome."

(Swete) That this beast symbolized this world power is further suggested by the reference to the effect that one of his heads was smitten unto death, and his death-stroke was healed. We are told that in the year 68 A.D. the Roman emperor, Nero, inflicted a mortal wound upon himself. In later years when the emperor Domitian was carrying on such a reign of terror in persecuting the Christians he seemed to be the embodiment of the spirit and power of Nero, hence he might be looked upon as Nero resuscitated, with his death-stroke healed. These incidents from secular history may thus throw light upon the inspired record. Just as the beast is the tool of Satan, and is characterized by brutishness, blasphemy and great authority, even so World power is used of Satan as his agent in persecuting the church, in blaspheming God, and in winning to his allegiance and worship all who dwell upon the earth whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. Great as is the authority of the beast it is limited as to the period of its exercise, and as to the subjects of his rule. In the time of such severe persecution are the saints able to accept readily as their allotment, if needs be, exile, great tribulation, the death sentence, and even the death stroke? "Here is the patience and faith of the saints."

The second agent of Satan in the exercise of his hostility to the saints is the beast coming up out of the earth. Like the first beast, he, too, shows upon him the mark and the influence of the dragon, and, exercising the authority of the first beast, seeks to win converts to him. In the execution of his designs he makes use of signs, counterfeit miracles, shall we call them, that he should even call down fire from heaven, and cause breath and speech to enter into the image of the beast. As is shown perhaps more clearly later on in the book than in the present context he is evidently identified with the false prophet. Probably he is used to represent a system rather than a person, and so may be looked upon in general as symbolical of false religion.

The second beast in his alliance with the forces hostile to Christianity, seeks to secure universal worship of the image of the beast, and the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name on the right hand and upon the forehead of all, and the murder, or 'boycotting' of all who are not so marked.

We shall not tarry to mention the various theories suggested in efforts to understand the significance of the number of the beast. Suffice to say that probably the most plausible and generally accepted view is that it refers to Neron Caesar since the Hebrew letters of his name will fit the number 666. In him and in the later emperor Domitian there was embodied the world power of the time at the height of its enmity against the seed of the woman.

With this dreadful picture of the dragon and his bestial agents before us we long for a brighter vision, a more hopeful outlook. The next chapter gives us this satisfaction, while the dark background which we have just had causes the heavenly light to shine out all the more brightly. Behold the Lamb, spotless, sacrificial, sovereign,

standing on Mount Zion, and with Him his faithful believers who have been sealed with the seal of the living God. In Old Testament symbolism Mount Zion stood for "the security and strength which belong to the people of God." Jehovah speaking in the second Psalm says, "Behold I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," while the words of the prophet are, "And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return and come with singing unto Zion." The writer to the Hebrews in enumerating the Christian's privileges, begins a long and glorious list by saying, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion." From this heavenly Jerusalem there resounds that new song which no man could learn save those who had been purchased out of the earth. The blood of the Lamb was the price paid for this heavenly music lesson. Only the pure in heart can sing this music of the heart. They follow the Lamb in any direction that He goes. They are to be the first fruits unto the Lamb, fully consecrated. Like the Lamb himself they are spotless, without blemish, "sacrificially perfect," - like Him in character and in consecration. What a glorious redemption!

Yet the vision of the Seer is not limited only to the redeemed in heaven, as wonderful as that scene is. It must also take into view the unredeemed upon earth. He sees an angel flying where the sun is at its meridian height, and it has the eternal good tidings to proclaim to them that dwell upon the earth. Although the major note of this angelic proclamation is warning of judgment, it still leaves a place for repentance. In the midst of wrath mercy is remembered.

The second angel announces the fall of Babylon together with the reason therefor. Babylon here as in later chapters is probably a synonym of Rome, that proud, corrupt city, the seat of an immorality that contaminated all the nations.

With the proclamation of the third angel we see an indication of the "white heat of God's anger" as it is displayed towards the worshippers of the beast and his image. Such are the objects of His most severe punishment, a punishment intensified and aggravated by the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb himself. This judgment in its character is complete and final in contrast to the limited and partial judgments which followed the blowing of the trumpets.

In the midst of all this dreadful judgment the saints are patient, illustrating the true religion of the Bible, namely, faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to the commandments of God. And even those who die in the Lord not only have rest in marked contrast to the 'no rest' of the worshippers of the beast, but they have a blessed rest, and the good that they have done lives on while the smoke of the torment of the impenitent goeth up forever and ever.

As a climax to this section of the book the two closing scenes carry us forward to the reaping of the earth at the end of the age. Here once more we see mercy as well as justice, the wheat harvest of believers, and the vintage of the wicked. For the former the glorified Christ is seen with a crown, not of thorns this time, but of gold, and in his hand is a sharp sickle. In response to the message from the sanctuary of heaven He cast his sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped at the hour of its ripeness.

For the gathering of the vintage of the earth the ministry of the angel is exercised. Here the destiny of the wicked is the great winepress of the wrath of God, trodden without the city - a bloody scene picturing the wrath and curse of God upon those who are enemies of the Lamb. Thus against the evil forces of the world, the flesh and

the devil the Lamb and His people must come out victorious.

"May, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

FULFILLMENT OF THE WRATH OF GOD

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness." Romans 1:18.

In the first part of the book of Revelation following the opening of the sixth seal, announcement is made of the great day of the wrath of God and the Lamb, before which only the true Israel of God will be able to stand. Again this same wrath is mentioned after the sound of the seventh trumpet at the conclusion of chapter eleven. However, it remains for the second half of the book to more completely develop the idea of the wrath of God. In chapter fourteen, verse ten, where the terrible judgment that falls upon the Caesar-worshippers is described, there are given us the two different words to set forth the meaning of this terrible word wrath, each of which is used significantly in the section which is now before us. According to Thayer the one means "angry heat, anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again." The other word refers to "indignation which has arisen gradually and becomes more settled." When used of God it means "that in God which stands opposed to man's disobedience, obduracy and sin, and manifests itself in punishing the same."

At the opening of chapter fifteen, which is an introduction to the following chapter, the first verse gives us a kind of 'title' for the entire section. "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God." After the parenthetical vision which follows of the victors who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, this general theme of the fulfillment of the wrath of God is resumed until we see all the seven bowls of the wrath of God

poured out successively in intensified judgment upon the earth, the seas, the rivers, the sun, the throne of the beast, the Euphrates, and the air. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness." Rom. 1:18.

This series of the seven bowls to which we are now introduced has in its imagery much in common with the ten plagues of Egypt. It also in many respects may be compared to the seven seals of this book, but especially to the trumpet series. The plagues which are now revealed have the distinction of being the last, or the final series of such visitations. They complete what one has termed "the physical manifestations of the divine wrath." They lead up to the time when the world is ripe for final judgment. "For in them is finished the 'angry heat' of God."

Following the announcement of the title there comes a consolatory vision such as is so characteristic of the structure of this book. While considering the fulfillment of the angry heat of God our attention is turned to the mercy of God. By the side of the sea of glass mingled with fire are seen the conquerors standing, having the harps of God. They come off victorious from the beast. In spite of his great power he is forced to surrender before those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. And we are not surprised that the victorious saints gathered around the glassy sea having in their hands the harps of God, and in their hearts the music of heaven, burst forth in adoration and praise to God, singing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

While the music of this heavenly anthem of the redeemed is still sounding in the ear, the original theme which had been interrupted

is now resumed, and unpopular though it may be, must be unfolded in the succeeding visions. This time there is seen the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven opened, and from the sanctuary come forth the seven angels with the seven plagues. To them was given by a representative of Creation seven golden bowls full of the angry heat of God. "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power." Smoke is frequently used in the Old Testament as symbolical of the divine presence, especially of glory and majesty and holiness. The whole of Mount Sinai had smoked at the giving of the law. After the tabernacle had been set up in the wilderness, the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle because of which Moses was unable to enter. Similarly when the glory of Jehovah filled king Solomon's temple the priests could not minister by reason of the cloud. And in like manner no one was able to enter the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished. The great voice out of the temple in heaven, probably the voice of God himself, gave the commission to the seven angels, namely that they should pour out the seven bowls of the angry heat of God into the earth.

In general it may be said of the series of judgments here visited, that in contrast to many others that had preceded, they are total rather than partial, permanent rather than temporary, punitive instead of disciplinary, that they have no softening, converting power.

The first bowl poured out upon the earth caused a noisome, grievous sore upon the worshippers of the beast. The second judgment had the sea as its object, causing a sea of blood so that every

living thing died, even the things that were in the sea. The pouring out of the third bowl caused the fresh waters to become blood, and invoked responses of approval from the angel of the waters and the altar. The effect of the pouring out of the fourth bowl upon the sun was that of scorching men with great heat. Those who had thus been tortured by these visitations of wrath became more hardened in their sin so that they blasphemed the name of God and repented not to give God glory. The object of the next judgment is the very throne of the beast, so that his whole kingdom becomes darkened, corresponding to the darkness of Egypt under the plagues of Moses. Here again the worshippers of the beast, though in mortal anguish under the wrath and curse of God, repented not of their evil works. The pouring out of the sixth bowl is of peculiar interest for a number of reasons. One is because of its parallelism with the sixth trumpet in the use of the great river Euphrates as a symbol. Another is the important question that immediately arises in this connection regarding the identification of the kings that come from the sunrising. The way was made ready for them thru the drying up of the river Euphrates, which was the object of this sixth judgment. What kings are here meant? Some say they are heathen kings. Dr. Milligan, in the light of certain Old Testament prophecies (Isaiah 11:15-16; 51:10; Zech. 10:10-12) gives a more attractive and perhaps the true answer when he says they are the "remnant of the Israel of God as they return from all the places whither they have been led captive, and as God makes their way plain before them."

A third intensely interesting subject here treated is that of the last great war of the nations, the ultimate cause, the proximate cause, the contestants, the silence as to its date, its naming of the

place of conflict. The ultimate cause is the old dragon, or as manifested in a threefold way, in the three great enemies who are the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. From these three go the three unclean spirits, spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. It is significant that the time will come stealthily, hence the blessedness of those who are watching and prepared. The place of this final world war is called in the Hebrew, Har-Magedon. Historically this name is associated with the field of battle where Barak and Deborah conquered the hosts of the Canaanite king, Jabin. Later on in history this was the field where Pharaoh-Necho overthrew the great king Josiah. We are told that there was perhaps never a greater mourning for a king than that which attended the passing of king Josiah. The national grief was unexampled. Hence this might appropriately symbolize the world wide distress that will attend the last great conflict of the kings of all the nations on the field of Har-Magedon. As to what will be the exact character and form of this last great world war we can say very little, but in the light of the whole range of scripture teaching we hold to the general view that it will be a conflict spiritual in character between the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil.

The pouring out of the seventh bowl of the angry heat of God upon the air was the occasion of the great voice out of the temple from the throne saying, It is done. This completes the series of such visitations leading up to the final judgment. As a part of the fulfillment of the seventh of the bowl judgments there come lightning and voices and thunders and a great earthquake, perhaps suggestive of the power and majesty of God and the social and racial upheavals

that will attend the great day of the Lord. In the midst of these events the cities of the nations, symbolical of the strongholds of sin, are destroyed. In particular, Babylon the great is remembered in the sight of God as a typical stronghold of sin. The symbolic meaning of Babylon will be considered more fully in the next section of our study. What we wish to emphasize in this connection is that her portion is the cup of the wine of the fierceness of the wrath of God. Here the word for wrath is not in the sense of angry heat, that boils up and soon subsides, the word used elsewhere in the record of this series of judgments. On the other hand the word here refers to that calm, settled indignation which has arisen gradually and becomes more settled, "That in God which stands opposed to man's disobedience, obduracy and sin, and manifests itself by punishing the same." This is not just an outburst of angry heat, but the kind of wrath that abides upon the one who does not obey the Son, and is revealed against all "ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

In the Old Testament hail was used as a symbol of God's wrath upon the enemies of Israel. In this connection we have this symbol, repeated and emphasized. The effect of the plague of hail in Egypt was to cause Pharaoh to at least nominally confess his sin, recognize the righteousness of Jehovah, beg for mercy, and promise to set free God's people. But alas, the effect here is not even a nominal confession, on the other hand, only blasphemy. In the last analysis we have the impenitent sinner in the hands of an angry God.

"Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come. That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance

unto life, with the diligent use of all the means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption." (Shorter Catechism)

Thank God we have revealed from heaven not only the wrath of God, but in the gospel of his Son there is also revealed a righteousness from faith unto faith, so that the believer becomes acceptable before God, justified, sanctified, glorified.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF BABYLON

"For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23.

In the previous section where we had a general view of the fulfillment of the wrath of God, mention was made of the particular judgment falling upon Babylon. Even earlier in the book the doom of Babylon had been announced by the angel who had said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." The section before us for consideration now takes up this subject of Babylon and develops it in detail in a form of literature among the most highly figurative of the whole book. Although we may not be certain of the meaning of every expression, there is reasonable clarity as to the broad outlines and practical message. In general we shall consider the meaning, the character, and the judgment of "Babylon the great which was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

At the outset two symbolical figures are introduced, the great harlot, and the scarlet-colored beast. The first picture shows the harlot sitting upon many waters, and exerting a corrupt influence throughout the world. In the second vision the woman is sitting upon the beast, and is in the midst of luxury and abominations and blood-thirstiness, and upon her forehead a name written, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and of the Abominations of the Earth." In the presence of all this mystery we are not left simply to wonder. An angel appears to tell "the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns."

First of all comes the interpretation of the beast which is not essentially different from the beast as he has already appeared in the book. He is an agent of Satan embodying anti-Christian world power. Here he is presented with special emphasis upon his apparent travesty upon the life, death, resurrection and return of Christ. "He was, is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition." A further interpretation of the seven heads of this beast throw added light upon his identity. The seven heads have a twofold symbolism. First, they are seven mountains upon which the woman sitteth. This reminds us immediately of the seven hills upon which were built the city of Rome. But they are also seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue for a little while. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition." Perhaps the best historical interpretation of this passage is that the seven heads are symbolic of seven Roman emperors, namely, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. Although Domitian is the eighth, yet since he was in a sense the embodiment of the spirit and power of Nero, he could be called one of the seven. As a previous interpretation has suggested, Nero was an embodiment of the beast. One other question to consider is how to harmonize this vision which, if the above view is correct belongs to the time of Vespasian, with the traditional date of the book which is probable 93 or 95 A. D. An answer suggested by Swete will clear the atmosphere on this point. It may be that the author "purposely transfers himself in thought to

the time of Vespasian interpreting past events under the form of a prophecy after the manner of apocalyptic writers." The ten horns are symbolical of ten kings who have yet to come into their power, but receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. This may mean these anti-Christian world monarchs of the future, who in unity of mind and allegiance to the beast will rule for a short period of time.

Over against all this enigmatic language we have in verse fourteen the clear statement of three future events: first, the conflict between these evil powers of the world and the Lamb; second, the assurance of the victory of the Lamb, for he is Lord of lords and King of Kings; third, that those who are with the Lamb, namely, the called and chosen and faithful, will share with him in the victory. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our attention is next directed to the interpretation of the woman of the mystery. A study of her position as set forth in successive passages gives a key to the understanding of the symbol. She is first spoken of as sitting upon many waters which are "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." No doubt there is here a general classification of the inhabitants of the world empire. She also sitteth upon the beast, the personification of secular world power. Then again she sitteth upon seven mountains, the location of the world capital. Hence the conclusion is natural that this woman called Babylon the great, symbolized Rome as representative of world power that is secular and anti-Christian.

This conclusion is strengthened by a study of the character of

this new Babylon. The very name, "Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth" gives us a brief character sketch. Ancient Rome had, as it were, given birth to, and had nourished vice and idolatry so that her evil influence had been felt throughout the empire of the world. "And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth," and with whom they had committed fornication. "And they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication." By an easy transition we can think of this whole symbol as representing all world civilization like that of Rome.

Having before us something of the meaning and character of the Babylon of the Apocalypse let us now consider the judgment of which she is the object - that theme so prominent in this section of the book. The interpreting angel of chapter seventeen tells of the human instruments, their methods, and the divine hand behind it all. The human means of divine judgment are the evil powers symbolized by the ten kings and the beast, who will turn from their close alliance and support of the harlot unto a bitter hatred of her. This in turn will result in intense cruelties inflicted upon her, effecting finally her complete destruction. God makes use of the wrath of such men for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes.

In the next vision the mighty voice of the angel having great authority, in an anticipatory vision, reiterates the fact of the fall of Babylon, the resulting desolation, and reasons for her downfall.

In the presence of the terrible doom of the great harlot, Babylon, what is to be the fate of the saints who dwell in her? Another voice from heaven answers this question with the command, "Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with

her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."

All Christians thru the ages are hereby warned against entanglement in the sins of Babylon and the punishment which must inevitably follow.

"Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?

"Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." (2 Cor. 6:14-18)

Although God assures his people that their sins and their iniquities he will remember no more, yet the sins of Babylon have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered in judgment her iniquities. The voice from heaven even instructs the instruments of divine justice to punish her in kind, and even double the punishment, and in the place of her self-glorification and luxury to give her torment and mourning. Because of her pride and self-confidence in one day shall come upon her death, mourning and famine, "and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judged her."

The extent, completeness, and effect of the fall and desolation of Babylon are further pictured in three dirges. The first one is the lament of the kings of the earth who had become ensnared in her vice, idolatry, and luxury; the second, the wail of the merchants who had waxed rich by the power of her luxury. While the kings bewail loss of strength, the merchants think of the loss of wealth. The third lament comes from the ship-masters and all the seafaring men who are

also impressed with the bad effect upon their business of the destruction of the city. In the refrain of each dirge the fact of speedy judgment is emphasized.

In striking contrast to the wailings of kings, merchants, and mariners on the one hand is the call to the heaven, the saints, apostles and prophets to rejoice, because God had judged their judgment upon Babylon. The prayers of the saints are answered. Their cause and the cause of heaven are identified. The great world power arrayed against Christ and His church is at last destroyed.

Once more the greatness, the completeness, and the finality of Babylon's fall are emphasized by symbolical action. A strong angel casting a great stone into the sea says, "Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all." Her music and business and light and joy shall all be no more. And the reason for her gigantic destruction may be summed up in one word, "sin". Babylon must inevitably fall because of her luxury, the deceptions and seductions of idolatry, and bloodguiltiness. "The wages of sin is death."

In chapter 18:20 both heaven and the saints had been called upon to rejoice in the triumph of their common cause. In the fourfold Hallelujah of chapter nineteen we have their response to this call. Only in this passage is the word Hallelujah found in the New Testament. We are told that in the early Christian church this Hallelujah "was hailed as the connecting link between the worship of the church on earth and the worship of heaven." In this wonderful anticipatory song of praise in which heaven and earth join, Hallelujah is the first word and the key word. The reason for this outburst of praise to God on the part of a great multitude in heaven was because of the execution

of the righteous judgment of God upon the great harlot, Babylon. Again they repeat this word of praise taken from the vocabulary of heaven. And the smoke of Babylon the great, but destroyed, goeth up forever and ever. This world event also calls forth from the representatives of the church and of creation worship, endorsement, Hallelujah. And a voice from the throne summons the universal church. The Seer of Patmos then hears that heavenly chorus of a great multitude which no man can number, uniting in their Hallelujah. Whereas the first part of this Hallelujah chorus which was probably voiced by the angelic host, rejoiced over the execution of judgment upon the harlot, the universal church gives praise for the companion events, namely the reign of the Lord, God Almighty, and the marriage of the Lamb. The positive side of the judgment of Babylon might be expressed in the words of Revelation 11:15, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign forever and ever."

The harlot judged, the kingdom come, and that third simultaneous event, that new note struck by the church's eucharist - the marriage of the Lamb, these three are events of such glorious significance as to call forth the Hallelujahs of all the angelic hosts and all the redeemed church of God. The special reason for the exceeding great joy of the universal church is that "the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready." This theme here introduced will receive more attention in a later chapter.

With the announcement of the marriage and the bride made ready, our next idea in the figure is in regard to the invitations to the marriage supper. In this connection there comes from the great voice that fourth great beauty of the book, which advances perhaps

further than any of the preceding the thought of the glories awaiting the believer. "Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Such a privilege as this awaits "the called, and chosen and faithful."

As our next study begins we shall have the picture of the coming of the Bridegroom, the Conqueror of the kingdom of the world.

"Savior, hasten Thine appearing;
Bring, O bring the glorious day,
When the awful summons hearing,
Heaven and earth shall pass away;
Then with golden harps we'll sing,
Glory, glory to our King!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen."

FROM VICTORY UNTO VICTORY

"Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Matthew 26:64b.

The book of Revelation has been called "The Oratorio of Victory." Throughout the book the note of triumph is always a major one. According to the very structure of the book at the close of different series of visions the idea of the ultimate complete triumph of the Lamb and His people is in a climatic way repeatedly emphasized. This idea of final victory is inseparably connected with the second coming of Christ, which fact is constantly kept in the foreground throughout the book. In the very introduction is found the announcement, "Behold he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen." Again, near the heart of the book, introducing the visions of the reaping of the earth at the end of the age, are the words of the apostle, "And I saw and behold a white cloud, and on the cloud I saw one sitting, like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." Now as we come to the study of this great victory section in chapters nineteen and twenty, the supreme, central figure presented in the heaven opened is the victorious King, appearing in great power and glory. "And behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness doth he judge and make war." The white horse was considered an emblem of victory. The many diadems on the head of the king are suggestive of the fact that all authority has been given him in heaven and on earth, that he has been highly exalted. His garment is sprinkled with blood. The armies of heaven follow him upon white horses, thus forming as it were a

magnificent victory parade with the triumphant Warrior in the lead. Although he appears with all the regalia and retinue of a warrior, his purpose seems to be, not so much to initiate new warfare, but to execute judgment upon the forces already defeated. He is a judge with eyes of flame and out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword. And he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

There is no mistaking his identity. He is called first, Faithful and True, faithful to his promise that he will return, true in that he is real and not imaginary. Then he has a name known only to himself. There is a mystery about him that no human can fully comprehend. He is also called The Word of God. He is the perfect and final revelation of God to man. God hath spoken in his Son. Then as if to give a final emphasis that he appears as a victorious warrior he has the name, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

In connection with his appearance in triumph there is also given a summons to "The great supper of God," a feast to celebrate the completion of the victory. And judgment is executed upon two of the three great enemies of the Lamb and their followers. In a previous chapter had been portrayed the destruction of Babylon. Now the special objects of divine wrath in judgment are the beast and the false prophet. They with their forces had gathered to make war upon him that sat upon the horse and against his army. But instead of the record of a battle we have the account of the seizure of these two great enemies and their consignment to the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone, the ultimate destination of the wicked. And the kings of the earth with their armies who were allied with the beast and the false prophet are killed with the sword, and their flesh given to the birds of the

heavens. Thus the completeness of the victory is vividly portrayed. Our interpretation of chapter 19:11-21 places it at the climax of this series of judgments, and in time at the end of the age, at the appearing of Christ in judgment. However, there is another view well worthy of our consideration, which does not limit these scenes solely to the time of the second coming of Christ, but considers it as a picture of the conquests of the victorious Word of God throughout the entire Christian age. Dr. Warfield says that we have here "a picture of the victorious career of the gospel of Christ in the world," that it presents in symbolical form the thought of Romans eleven, and First Corinthians fifteenth chapter. Whichever view may be taken we may all rejoice in its practical message of the completeness of victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We now approach the famous millennium chapter. Its prophetic interest and its difficulty of interpretation challenge us, its unsolved problems humble us, and its spiritual message edifies us. It has been said of this chapter that "because the so called millennium is included in its compass, it has been more than any other part of the book tortured by tendency-exposition into a variety of divergent senses."

We shall not tarry long to consider the different views of the millennium, yet it will make for clarity at this juncture to state in the words of Dr. R. A. Webb the viewpoint of two great traditional schools of interpretation, the pre-millennarian and the post-millennarian. "The pre-millennarian thinks that the Second Coming will be causative; the post-millennarian that it will be consequential. One thinks that the return of Christ will be the potent and efficient reason

for the triumph of the gospel and the success of His cause in the earth; the other thinks it will be the result of the triumph of the gospel and the success of His cause. In the one view Christ will return as a soldier to lead the host of God in a fight to the finish; in the other view, He will return as a conqueror to reap the fruits of a victory already fully won. For the one He will come as a worker to carry Christian labors to their triumphant end; for the other, He will come as a reaper to garner the harvest of His word and Spirit. Hence the order in which they respectfully bulletin the last things." The paragraphs of chapter nineteen just reviewed seem to indicate that He will come more in the capacity of a conqueror and reaper than a soldier and worker.

An understanding of chapter twenty is greatly enhanced if we are mindful of its position in the structure of the book as a whole. For such an understanding of its place in the book, as well the view here presented as to its meaning we are largely indebted to Dr. E. C. Caldwell who gave such a lucid treatment of the subject in his booklet entitled "The Millennium." According to this view chapter twenty is the sixth of the main series of visions of the book, "each series of which reaches from the beginning of the conflict to the victorious end," or from the time of the first to the second advents of Christ.

The main facts of the chapter as revealed in its four visions are: the binding of Satan; the living and reigning with Christ of the souls of the martyrs and confessors, and the living not of the rest of the dead; the loosing of Satan and his committal to the lake of fire; the general resurrection and final judgment. Hence within this chapter we go from victory unto victory, from the initial victory over Satan symbolized by the binding, to the complete and final victory over

Satan, the unrighteous, and death itself. Or if we take the whole section from chapter 19:11 to 20:15 we also go from victory unto victory, the victory of the conqueror on the white horse to the victory of Him who sits upon the great white throne. Or if we accept the view of Dr. Warfield regarding chapter 19:11-21 we also go from victory unto victory, from the initial victory of the Word of God incarnate to the final victory over all the forces of evil.

The only passage in the Bible where the word millennium is found is Revelation chapter twenty. One view as to its meaning here is that it expresses "no period of time, but quality of time, a glorious and a perfect period," that it is a symbol for completeness. Satan bound for a thousand years means that he is completely bound. Some consider it as designating the same period as the three and one half years, the little time, mentioned a number of times in the book, the same period from different points of view. According to this view the one refers to the period of the reign of the saints in heaven, the other to the simultaneous period, the age of conflict and persecution here upon earth. That the one thousand years refers to the period from the beginning of the Christian era to the consummation of the age is probable for a number of reasons. One has already been intimated in the glance at the structure of the book. Then again in a very real sense Satan's power was weakened at the time of the life, death, and resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Jesus had said just before his crucifixion, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out," also "The prince of this world hath been judged." Such sayings as these and others similar to them lead us to believe that the truth of them is here stated by the symbol "the binding of Satan." Then at the end of one thousand years he is

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loosed and finally judged, a judgment which forms one of the concurrent events of the second advent.

Not only the subject of Satan is involved in the millennial idea but also that of the martyrs and confessors of the second paragraph. Who are they? Where are they? What is their condition? We may best answer these questions in the words of Dr. Warfield as he says, "The vision, in one word, is a vision of the peace of those who have died in the Lord; and its message to us is embodied in the words of Revelation 14:13; "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth" - of which passage the present is indeed only an expansion."--- The millennium of the apocalypse is the blessedness of the saints who have gone away from the body to be at home with the Lord."

As has been pointed out by Dr. Caldwell, there is in this passage a sharp contrast between these saints, the blessed dead, and the rest of the dead. The martyrs and confessors lived and reigned, while the rest of the dead lived not until, the thousand years should be finished. During the intermediate state of the wicked they are in a state of spiritual death, separate from God in outer darkness, until the final judgment when they are consigned to the lake of fire the final place of the wicked. On the other hand, "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies being still united with Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." (Shorter Catechism) "That is the living and reigning with Christ; that is the first resurrection." (Dr. E. C. Caldwell) "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Although Satan was signally defeated at the beginning of the thousand years, yet even so this victory over him was only partial and for a limited period of time. At the end of this period, or at the end of this age, he is pictured as being loosed, coming forth out of his dungeon where he has been bound with the great chain. As is characteristic of him he comes forth to deceive the nations and incite them and muster them to wage war upon the saints. At this juncture a significant thing happens. Fire comes down out of heaven and devours the armies of the nations, and the devil that deceived them receives his final judgment - the lake of fire. As in the previous chapter at the gathering of the kings of the earth and their armies to fight the conqueror, and as in chapter sixteen, verse sixteen, at Har-Magedon, so here there is no record of a battle, but of judgment. Here the symbol of judgment is fire coming down out of heaven. We wonder at the meaning of this apocalyptic symbol. Long before the day of Pentecost fire had been used in scripture as symbolical of the Holy Spirit, and from that time it was a most common symbol of the third person of the Trinity. We wonder if here at the end of the age, at the time of the final overthrow of Satan, this language means that there shall be such amighty outpouring of the Spirit of God from the very throne of the Mediatorial King, that He, the third person of the Godhead, instead of the King himself, is the representative of the triune God who is to execute final judgment on all the powers of evil in that last great day. Or is this fire, as has been suggested by Dr. Caldwell, a symbol of the second coming of Christ, since scripture speaks of "the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire."

Then comes the final vision of the series - a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. In previous pictures of the final judgment at the end of the age we have seen the white cloud and the white horse. Now it is the white throne. White is suggestive of absolute purity. Before the great white throne must stand the dead, the great and the small, in that day of the general resurrection and the final judgment. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. There the two great books will be opened and every one will be judged according to his works. We are saved by grace but our rank in heaven is determined according to our works. It has been suggested that one of these books is the book of the law, the moral law, and another the book containing the record of each of our lives. The law is to be the standard by which our deeds are to be measured, not the gospel. What an incentive this great fact should be to every Christian to do his very best to work for Christ while it is day. The final judgment of any not found in the book of life is the second death, even the lake of fire. Hence the final state of the impenitent is the same as that of the beast, the false prophet, and Satan himself - all are cast into the same place. Into this lake of fire is also to be cast death, and Hades, its companion. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." Even death is "swallowed up in victory!" "But thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2-3

The last section had set forth in no uncertain terms the completeness of the victory of the Lamb over all the forces of evil at the time when He as Conqueror will appear in triumph for judgment. The twentieth chapter closes with a picture of the final state of the wicked resulting from the final judgment executed by him that sat upon the great white throne. But this is only a part of the picture, and this emphasizing the terrible state of the wicked. "And these shall go away into eternal punishment." The section now before us gives us the complement of this picture by showing us something of the glories that will come to the saints as a result of the victory of the Lamb.

Dr. Warfield says of this vision, "It is a picture of the heavenly estate of the church, not merely of the ideal of the church, but of the ideal of the church as realized after the turmoil of earth and the secluded waiting in Paradise alike are over." We believe this perfect state of the church will only be realized at the end of this age, on the other side of the final judgment. Christ as the Bridegroom will completely realize the consummation of the eternal purpose of the Trinitarian family "that He might present the church to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

As the veil is drawn aside and as we behold this glorious picture of the church triumphant let us take a look at its character, its

1. The first group of 100 people who were sent to the concentration camps were the Jews of the city of Vienna. They were sent there in 1938, after the Anschluss. They were sent to the Danube Island (Donaufeld) concentration camp. The camp was located on the Danube river, near the city of Vienna. The camp was run by the Gestapo. The conditions in the camp were very poor. The prisoners were forced to work long hours. They were also subjected to physical and psychological abuse. The camp was closed in 1941, and the prisoners were sent to other concentration camps or to the gas chambers.

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12. necessary funds to carry out its policy.

1. The first of these is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is of European descent. This is a fact which has been recognized by the government and the people for many years. It is a fact which has been recognized by the government and the people for many years.

and to certify that the same is a true and correct copy of the original as the same appears in the records of the Department of the Interior.

symbols, its origin, heritage, glory, beauty, perfection, influence, condition of entrance, its life-giving power, and its program for eternity.

First of all the vision of the apostle presents the character of the church triumphant. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more." "The Christian scriptures," says Dr. Webb, "represent God as having taken three looks at this earth of ours. First, in the morning of its creation, when it swam, a new made thing in the amplitudes of space; and then He stood on the steps of His throne and admired it as good, very good, superlatively good. Second, in the day of its fall, when it lay before Him, a sin-blighted and perverted globe; and then He rose in His judicial wrath and cursed the very 'ground', because of the moral infamy of the race for which He had made it and to whom He had graciously given it. Third, in the consummation of the redeeming work of Christ, when it floated before His vision as 'the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness,' and then He stood upon the steps of His great white throne and admired its beauty, and crowned His Son for His glorious success in 'the restitution of all things.'" Such a new creation we believe to be the eternal habitation of the church triumphant.

We note next the two symbols of this glorious church used in this vision. One is the holy city, new Jerusalem, a striking contrast to Babylon great, but destroyed. The other symbol of the church is equally as beautiful and suggestive, that of the Bride, the wife of the Lamb, again a direct contrast to the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.

This holy city is seen of John coming down out of heaven from God as a bride adorned for her husband. The builder and maker of the new Jerusalem is God himself.

The citizens of this new Jerusalem, or the members of this glorified church have privileges of such a wonderful character as to make a most precious heritage. We have already mentioned the new creation, their dwelling place. A second feature of this heavenly heritage is fellowship with God in fulfillment of the promise of God to His people from most ancient times. Under the law God had said to His chosen people, "And I will set my tabernacle among you." In the time of the prophets He had said again, "My tabernacle also shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." At the dawn of the gospel age "The word was made flesh and tabernacled among us." So the church after the judgment will have the indwelling presence, the fellowship and comfort of the covenant-keeping God world without end. The Divine Source and Giver of all these blessings adds to them also that living water which alone can quench the thirst and quicken the life of the weary soul. Then too, there will be perfected in this church triumphant a relationship which is even more precious, if possible, than the covenant relationship between God and His people, namely, the filial relationship between God the Father and believers who become His children by adoption. "I will be his God and he shall be my son" is a promise which comes as a kind of climax to the description in the vision of the heritage of the conqueror. One of the most glorious present privileges of the child of God is sonship in our Father's house, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God, and such we are." Yet this adoption which is

begun here, like the other priceless benefits of the church of the present, will become complete and perfect only in that great day of the redemption of the body. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." While this vision carries us on in its wonderful presentation of the glories of the church that follow the final judgment, it also harks back to the other picture of the doom of the impenitent, which brings out by way of contrast even more strikingly the inheritance of the saints. On the one hand we behold the new heaven and the new earth, and on the other the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. "And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

In chapter 21:9 the vision of verse two is taken up and unfolded more in detail. This passage leaves no doubt as to the identity of the symbols of the bride and the holy city. The apostle when told that he will be shown the bride, the wife of the Lamb, is carried away in the Spirit and shown the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. A first, a continued, and a lasting impression of the holy city is the presence within it of Divine glory. There is no need of material light, "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb." A second impression is the beauty of the city. A more gorgeous picture than is here presented can hardly be found in all literature. The writer "goes into a jewel room and builds the New Jerusalem out of sparkling stones-----all the exquisite gems are the precious stones with which he rebuilds the City of God, which had been polluted, disfigured and wrecked by a mob of sinful, foolish and frenzied citizens. The Divine Artificer will reset the jewel stones

of the New Earth so as to satisfy the highest taste and subserve the sublimest ends of utility." (R. A. Webb)

We are not only impressed with the glory and beauty of "Jerusalem the Golden," but with another quality which naturally accompanies the glory of the divine presence, namely, holiness or perfection. There are a number of suggestions of this quality of holiness - the luminary clear as crystal, the city and streets of pure gold, the shape of the city which is a perfect cube like the Holy of Holies of the tabernacles in the wilderness. Yet clearer than any of these symbols is the direct statement in the closing verse of the chapter. In giving the condition of entrance the words are, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie; but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." The holy, divine light concentrated in the holy city will radiate its glory far and wide. "And nations shall come to its light and kings to the brightness of its rising, "thus will be fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy that the true Israel will be the center of light or the world.

In the interior of this city of God the apostle beholds what may be the picture of the life giving power of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. He saw "a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and on the side of the river of water of life is the fruitbearing tree of life with its leaves for the healing of the nations. Here we have repeated the emphasis upon the international character of the inhabitants of the holy city.

As we approach the climax of the description of the New Jerusalem we are impressed with what is shown us regarding the occupation of its

citizens; or to change the figure the program for the members of the church triumphant. The saints throughout every age of the church have found a chief source of joy in service. The working Christian is the happy Christian. In like manner in the perfect state of the church following the consummation of this age we are told that the servants of the Lamb shall serve Him. Throughout the ages of eternity the redeemed saints of God will no doubt find a chief joy, among other joys unspeakable, in rendering a perfect service "unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Not only perfect service will characterize this glorified life of the saints but also perpetual sovereignty. Here we reach the climax of the vision. "And they shall reign forever and ever." It continues throughout all eternity. In the day of the appearing of our Savior from heaven what a glorious exaltation will be given graciously to the unworthy, underserving sinner, all because of victory thru our Lord Jesus Christ. "He that overcometh" says the ascended Jesus, "I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne."

"Living He loved me, dying He saved me,
Buried He carried my sins far away;
Rising He justified freely forever,
One day He's coming - O glorious day!"

EPILOGUE

With the end of the magnificent vision of the Holy City we have now before us in the book as a whole "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" to his servant John of "the things which must shortly come to pass." The epilogue, which in many respects corresponds to the prologue, gives its repeated testimony to the truth of the Revelation. A number of witnesses are called, including the angel, the apostle, and the Ascended Christ himself. Their final testimonies are given, beautitudes uttered, warning, invitation, promise, benediction.

A fundamental thought of the book, namely, the Second Coming of Christ, is given a final emphasis, the force of which we need to get. The Risen Lord here says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man as his work is." In response to this repeated announcement the Spirit, the Bride, and the individual saint seem to join in the eager expectation and desire for his speedy return. Such an attitude as this must ever characterize the true church of Jesus Christ. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will let him take the water of life freely." Here is given us a suggestion as to how we may best prepare for His reception and hasten His appearing. While the three classes, the Spirit, the bride and the individual hearer are calling unto the Risen Lord to come there is also given the evangelistic invitation to him that is athirst, to him that will, to take the water of life freely. Thus there is the effort being made to increase the number of those who will join in welcoming the return of Christ. A primary means of hastening this greatest of all future events is by prayer to Christ. "Come, Lord

Jesus." "Thy kingdom come." "We pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, the kingdom of grace advanced, and the kingdom of glory hastened." Then inseparably connected with such prayer must be the offering of the water of life to him that is athirst and to him that will, preaching the gospel of the kingdom to all peoples and nations. "Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

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