

THE MESSAGE FROM PATMOS

BY

REV. DAVID S. CLARK, D.D.

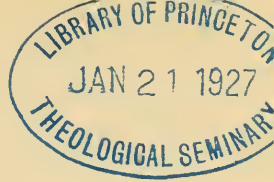
BS2825
C592



PS 2879
C 912

Division

Section



THE MESSAGE FROM PATMOS

BY

REV. DAVID S. CLARK, D. D.

AUTHOR OF

"A SYLLABUS OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY,"



Pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church,
and Instructor in the
Philadelphia School for Christian Workers
of the
Presbyterian and Reformed Churches.

TO THE MEMORY OF
MY PARENTS
REV. JAMES ARMSTRONG CLARK
AND
MARGARET SCOTT CLARK,
WHOSE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE
EARLY TURNED MY THOUGHTS TO
GOD'S HOLY WORD AND TO
THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,
THIS BOOK
IS REVERENTLY DEDICATED.

FOREWORD.

It seems desirable to state in the beginning that this exposition of The Revelation seeks to present the obvious meaning of the Apocalypse as it appears in the text taken at its face value, including its many references to other parts of the Scriptures. We have not tried to force the book into the molds of any theory; but to ask, what does the book say and what does it evidently mean?

In the pursuit of this purpose we have been led to pass criticism upon the premillennial view of the Apocalypse. We trust such criticism has not been unduly pressed; but since the view in question is somewhat prevalent at the present time, and is backed with a considerable literature it has received more than a passing notice in the present volume. This statement is made because the writer desires to disclaim antagonism to the premillennialists for whom he entertains a very high regard and whom he counts as his friends. For while the writer dissents from that particular doctrine he stands firmly by and with the premillennialist in his defense of the integrity, authority and inspiration of the holy Scriptures; and would define himself as a postmillennial fundamentalist.

The writer acknowledges indebtedness to a variety of sources; among others to Archdeacon Farrar, in his various works on the New Testament.

Professor William Milligan, in the Expositor's Bible Series.

The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,
—James Orr.

David Keppel, The Book of Revelation not a Mystery.

David Brown, The Structure of the Apocalypse; rather vague and sketchy.

C. I. Scofield, J. H. McConkey and others from the pre-millennial side. But chiefly to a scholar now unhappily too much forgotten, viz. Professor Henry Cowles whose commentary on the entire Bible evinces profound scholarship, extensive information, penetrating insight, sound common sense, practical judgment, and better than all, entire loyalty to the authority of God's word.

That this little book may honor God, extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and clarify the thoughts of its readers on what is considered a difficult portion of the holy Scriptures, is the desire and prayer of the writer.

DAVID S. CLARK,
2438 North 19th Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

PREFATORY CHAPTER.

The present volume is the outgrowth of a series of sermons on the book of Revelation delivered by the writer to the church of which he is the pastor. The series was undertaken with no thought of publication, and while the subject matter has been somewhat modified and enlarged, some evidences of the original purpose may still be apprehensible in style and verbiage, at least in certain of its parts. The colloquialisms are thus explained.

It was part of the writer's early discipline to commit to memory and to recite the entire book of Revelation; and subsequent study has led him to a view of its purpose and meaning which, he is confident, will meet the approval of scholarly and discriminating interpreters.

The literature on The Revelation is voluminous, and the views so various, that the present volume cannot be burdened with a review of them. The critical discussions concern the difference between the Apocalypse and the gospel of John as to language and style, thus affecting the question of authorship; whether the Apocalypse is to be regarded as a part and piece of the older apocalyptic writings; whether it is a unity, or composite after the style of documentary hypotheses; whether its origin is to be found in Babylonian mythology; the limits of time embraced in Revelation; its application to Jew, Roman, Saracen, Turk, Papacy, French Revolution etc., and a score of such questions. For an outline of this literature and a discussion of these questions the reader is referred to a standard Introduction, or to a Religious Cyclopaedia, such as the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

So much difference of opinion and confusion of thought exists in the interpretation of various sections of the book that these differences cannot all be traversed; and their omission is preferable to their inclusion. The purpose of this volume is to give a clear, sane, and sensible exposition without confusing the reader with unnecessary references. And we are hopeful that the interpretation given will commend itself.

Interpreters have been usually classified as 1. praeterist, regarding the prophecies as already fulfilled; 2. futurist, placing the whole book in the times of the millennium and the second advent; 3. historical, the fulfillment issuing in the continuous progress of the church and kingdom on to the end. This classification is not exact as no one can be altogether a praeterist or a futurist.

Even when one agrees with the general plan of some of these writers he must often differ largely in his conception of certain events and sections. This may be said of such praeterist writers e.g. as Moses Stuart, admirable in general, faulty in particulars. Some of the older praeterist interpreters found too much medieval history in the Apocalypse, and some modern writers ignore the historical features entirely. The former seek to interpret the book by coincidences of history, and the latter seek to impose upon the book a preconceived theory.

Prof. William Milligan of Aberdeen University has been read so widely that his work on the Revelation is perhaps the best known to modern readers. The church will ever be indebted to Prof. Milligan for his scholarly work, his pains-taking study, and his grasp of the subject in general and in detail. However it seems to the writer that Prof. Milligan has not done justice to the historical elements in the Apocalypse. He has leveled down the historical promontories till they are almost indistinguishable. The key to the book lies in just what Prof. Milligan has underestimated, admirable in other respects as his work is. When one gets clearly into his vision the outstanding land-marks of time with which John is dealing, much of the mystery and difficulty of the Revelation will disappear. To this end we hope this little volume will serve the discriminating reader.

A flood of literature on the Apocalypse is being presented to the public from Premillennial sources. All this literature absolutely ignores the historical situations, and presents a one-sided and inadequate treatment of the Apocalypse.

A very recent work is, *The Revelation of John*, by Prof. Arthur S. Peake, A.M. D.D. Professor of Biblical Exegesis in the University of Manchester, England. This work is scholarly, as we would expect from the pen of Prof. Peake, full of the literature on the subject, though not so much an interpretation of the book as a discussion of the outstanding problems of *The Revelation*. Prof. Peake is well informed on the questions raised, and familiar with past and current opinion, but perhaps too sparing of a definite conclusion. One feels that his work is punctuated with more interrogation points than periods, and turns away rather unsatisfied, with the wish that something more had been said. Prof. Peake holds to the Domitian date of the writing, or what is called the traditional date. In the latter half of last century the tide of scholarly opinion turned toward the Neronian date. At the present time there is some return to the traditional view of which Prof. Peake is an example. The present writer is convinced that the Neronian date is sustained by the internal evidence and that a later date increases the difficulties of interpretation if it does not render impossible a satisfactory explanation of large portions.

It is scarcely pertinent to present here the accepted rules of interpretation. However there is a view of prophetic interpretation, requiring some consideration in reference to passages in *The Revelation*, which may be appropriately mentioned. We refer to the day-for-a-year theory as applied to prophetic time. Dr. A. R. Fausset, joint author of a *Critical and Practical Commentary*, mentions it with approval and cites certain considerations to support the view; but admits that it cannot always be applied. We think it would be more correct if he had said that it can never be applied. The grounds for such a view will not bear examination.

1. Reference is made to Numbers 14:33,34. "Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." There is no proof here that a day in prophecy means a year. God said that they should wander forty years and forty years they wandered. Had God said they should wander forty days and the time

turned out to be forty years the theory might claim some support, but that is not the case. God said forty years, and the prophetic time and the actual time tally exactly. That they should wander one year for every day they searched the land was embraced in the prophecy itself. It is therefore no proof that a day in prophecy means a year in fulfillment.

2. Ezek. 4:4-6. Ezekiel was told to lie on his left side 390 days and on his right side 40 days for a sign to Israel of their iniquity. "I have appointed thee each day for a year." It is outside of all reason that Ezekiel lay on his left side 390 years and 40 years longer on his right side. That would be incredible longevity for Ezekiel's day. Nor is there any known sense in which there was a subsequent fulfillment in periods of 390 and 40 years respectively. And if this refers, as it probably does, to years of antecedent transgression, it is not the lengthening of a day to a year, but the shortening of a year to a day; and is but a symbolism and not a method of interpreting prophecy.

3. Daniel's seventy weeks gives no justification of the theory in question; since the prophecy embraces seventy sevens or heptads which naturally and evidently refers to years,—seventy sevens of years or 490 years till the Messiah.

4. The flood which was predicted for forty days did not last forty years.

5. The seven years of famine in Egypt were not 360 times 7 or the storehouses of Egypt would have been inadequate.

6. It was prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar should be driven out with the beasts of the field and eat grass as oxen till seven times should pass over him. If the seven years are taken literally it is quite feasible; but if 7 is to be multiplied by 360 making 2520 years, it is rather an extraordinary time for a limited diet.

7. "A thousand years is with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years." If this proved anything in the matter it would prove too much or too little. It does not say that a day is a year or a thousand years, or vice versa; but as such to the Lord.

The theory of a day for a year is entirely without warrant in the Scriptures. Time in the Scriptures is usually to be taken literally, though certain periods are often used indefinitely, or given in round numbers, or used symbolically to explain some idea with which the number has been associated. There are frequent references in The Revelation to periods of time for the proper interpretation of which this discussion has been introduced.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

Introductory Chapter.



ORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth, in recent days, a declaration of the things contained in this book, many of which are fanciful and fallacious, it seemed good to me also, having better understanding and insight into its meaning and mysteries, to write out in order the true interpretation thereof.

To the ordinary reader this is a very difficult book; it belongs to an apocalyptic literature to which the occidental mind is unaccustomed. It is far removed from our tastes and styles. The complexity of the visions becomes confusing and the meaning of its symbolism is not readily apprehended by those who have not gone deeply into the subject.

We hope to make it both clear and interesting, and practical as well; for there is no book of the Holy Scripture however abstruse in thought, or mystical in meaning, or symbolical in presentation that has not its practical and spiritual values for the present day Christian. This we will find to be true of Revelation. But what does it mean? Is it historical, prophetic, or both? Is it past or future? Has it been fulfilled, does it deal with the present day world events, or with things yet to come upon the stage of the world's affairs?

Is it all about the Premillennial doctrine of the Second Coming, or is that read into it by men of large imagination? How are these questions to be answered? Are they not interesting? The man on the street becomes enthusiastic over a game of chequers or chess, or the solution of a riddle, and altho he may not have the genius of a Champollion who deciphered the hieroglyphics, the seeming riddles of The Revelation should at least challenge his interest and enthusiasm.

Before entering upon an exposition of the text, there are certain things to be considered essential to the proper understanding of the whole.

I. Authorship.

Who wrote The Revelation? When the text tells us it was John it adds no explanation to tell us definitely what John it was. It does not say, John, the son of Zebedee, or John, the brother of James, it does not say, the beloved disciple, or the disciple whom Jesus loved, or the disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast at supper. All this was unnecessary. To say John was sufficient. Any other John would need a descriptive epithet, but there was one John who needed none.

There can be no doubt what John is meant, and but few have ever risen to dispute it. It is as though we should say Roosevelt. Though there are many Roosevelts, all the world understands what Roosevelt is meant by the unqualified name. There has been but little doubt and can be but little, that John the Apostle wrote the Revelation. This conviction is strengthened by some positive evidence, in that he is called in I:1 the servant of Christ, and in I:9 calls himself your brother and companion in tribulation.

II. To whom was the book written.

It is formally addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Rev. I:4 "John to the seven churches which are in Asia." Just as Paul addressed his letters to Timothy or Titus or to the churches at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Colosse, etc., so here John addresses this book to the seven churches of Asia. As John had supervision of these churches in Asia it was altogether to be expected that they would be the recipients of his communications.

The churches in question are those at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. The order in which they are named is topographical, being the order in which the apostle would come in any itinerary; and it has nothing whatever to do with their degrees of loyalty to, or defection from, the faith, or any supposed typology of subsequent ages.

The book however, although addressed to the seven churches, has its lessons to all ages; just as the epistles of Paul addressed to the churches of Galatia, Thessalonica, etc. are authoritative to all other churches of the Christian faith. But when this is said, it must ever be remembered, as a sound principle of interpretation, that when a book or epistle is addressed to a particular church or people it has primary reference to their condition, needs, and times. It must be, for the most part, intelligible to those to whom it is addressed. If not intelligible it is therefore a dead letter to them, and to all who cannot apprehend its meaning; and all revelation is intended for apprehension and not for misapprehension.

We may admit that there are a few things in the prophetic books that are obscure; some few things which the prophets could scarcely understand, and must search diligently what the Spirit in them did signify; but on the whole, a book is expected to be intelligible to its first readers; and the principle of interpretation is incontrovertibly sound. Any interpretation therefore that makes the body of a book unintelligible to those addressed is to be rejected. This principle has its bearing upon the present discussion, and we may say in advance that the book of Revelation had more to do with the age in which it was written than some modern interpreters are willing to allow.

III. The purpose of the book.

The purpose is revealed by the situation. The people addressed were living in the midst of bloody persecution, or immediately facing it in those churches; and the same was true in all the world where the gospel had been preached. The battle for the faith was unto blood. The witness for Jesus was face to face with the executioner's sword. It was a day when confession of Christ spelled martyrdom. Faithful martyrs had already fallen, like Antipas of the church of Pergamos. John was writing them to comfort them in the martyrdoms already suffered, and to gird them for the more fiery trials yet to ensue. This he does in one instance, chapter seven, by showing the redeemed in white robes, with palms in their hands, who had come up out of great tribulation.

Again we hear the prayers of these martyrs in heaven, saying: "How long wilt thou not avenge our blood on those that dwell on the earth?" indicating that these murderers were still living and had not yet been punished.

Again a great dragon is shown persecuting the church, and also the harlot city drunk with the blood of the saints. Here is persecution, bloody and terrible, then being endured, and to be endured in subsequent years. And accompanying these scenes of persecution are striking visions of God's judgments upon the wicked persecutors, and the consequent glorious triumph of Christ's church in all its conflicts.

Thus the purpose grows out of the situation of the church in John's day, and John was writing to meet the situation. John was the general of an army, riding up and down before his massed troops, speaking a last word of encouragement, intended to keep them steady in their baptism of blood. And we will see how appropriate this is when we have settled the date of the writing.

Now the purpose of a book is the key to its interpretation. That is one great principle of correct exegesis. And when passages are otherwise obscure they are to be interpreted in harmony with the general design. This often throws light on an obscurity that is otherwise impenetrable.

Every sensible author writes for a purpose and makes his points bear toward the attainment of his purpose. God does not write enigmas that have no meaning until they are fulfilled. In that case they reveal nothing and are no prophecies at all. Only as they reveal are they prophecies. Revelation is not to make things obscure, but to make them plain. Even in a book so symbolical as *The Revelation* the object is to make truth known and not to obscure it.

Christ addresses these seven churches. He says, I:11, "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia." And again, XXII:16, "I, Jesus have sent mine angel, or messenger, to testify these things **in the churches.**" That is, the churches addressed. The whole book is therefore addressed to those churches.

Christ further declares in the prologue I:1,3 that the things revealed "must shortly come to pass," and that "the time is at hand." The book has to do, therefore, and is largely concerned, with things nigh at hand to the churches addressed. It is simply impossible to take these words in any other sense and not do violence to the plain sense of the passage.

That most of the book refers to events of a past age does not deprive us of its lessons, nor detract from its value. It still stands on a par with the rest of Scripture, and no higher valuation could it have. Some things do indeed refer to a remote future, as we shall see, but the phrases "shortly come to pass," and "the time is at hand" measure the particular and special preview of the book.

The purpose of the book is further shown in the way God is brought to our vision. He walks amid the seven golden candlesticks; the seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches, he walks in the midst of them; he is **in these seven churches**, their present living companion; he holds the seven stars in his right hand, and 1:20 tells us that the seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches. Each message to these churches closes with a promise "to him that overcometh." All these plain terms, all this careful setting, all this particularizing of the seven churches shows that they are being girded with might and panoplied with power for the baptism of blood that "must shortly come to pass."

The Premillennial interpreters teach that the book was written to show the Premillennial coming of the Lord, with a vista of the ages to the end; that the seven churches are foreviews of seven ages,—that chapters four to nineteen describe the judgments upon the wicked world during a so-called period of Tribulation, while the church is in the air. Then follows the Second Coming, the resurrection of the righteous dead, the millennium, etc.

Such a scheme is not in the book of Revelation; it is grafted on from another stock; it is a reading into the book what is not there; we take this position in face of worthy and pious men whom we love and honor, not to antagonize them or their otherwise splendid work, but in the interest of correct interpretation and strict adherence to the text.

The book is a splendid encouragement to a suffering and militant church. One after another of the church's enemies go down in crashing and crushing judgment; God is always vindicated, and his cause triumphant.

Men may say in their pessimism:

“Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne;
Evil stands upon the neck of good
And rules the world alone.”

But this book contradicts all that pessimistic philosophy. It shows the very opposite; that **God** is always on the throne; that the wicked are always overthrown, and the righteous crowned with triumph and blessed with a beatific destiny.

IV. The date.

The date of the writing is important, not merely as a matter of historical knowledge, but as shedding light on the meaning of the book. Two dates have been assigned; one in the reign of Nero about 65 A. D. and the other in the reign of Domitian about the year 95 A. D.

Some might suppose that because the book appears at the end of the canon, therefore its place is indicative of its late authorship. While some chronological order is observed in the arrangement of the books of the canon, especially in the Old Testament, yet it is no hard and fast rule. The place of the Revelation in the canon is doubtless due to its character as apocalyptic, rather than to any chronological consideration.

The external testimony as to its date is very conflicting. The famous passage in Ireneus may have been the cause of this confusion. Ireneus speaks of something being seen in the reign of Domitian and some think that he referred to John's being seen. The subject of a verb in the third person singular may be either he or it where the subject is unexpressed. Eusebius states that John was banished to Patmos and saw his visions there in the reign of Domitian; but gives as his authority the disputed passage of Ireneus. There are others of the early fathers to

the same effect; while others still are indeterminate, and yet others favor the early date. However the superscription of the Syriac translation of the Apocalypse runs thus, "The Revelation which was made by God to John the Evangelist in the island of Patmos to which he was banished by Nero the emperor."

There has been therefore some difference of opinion as to the date. Such an accomplished scholar as Professor B. B. Warfield holds to the late date while Archdeacon Farrar asserts the early date and Professor Philip Schaff says, "The early date is now accepted by perhaps the majority of scholars."

The internal evidences are in our estimation overwhelmingly in favor of the Neronian date. A few of these it is well to call in mind.

(a) The messages to the seven churches disclose the fact that they were being subjected to the propaganda of Judaizing teachers. This indicates a date before Jerusalem had fallen. The Judaizing power had met its doom before the days of Domitian, but its efforts were rife in Nero's day.

(b) In chapter eleven the temple was measured which points to the fact that it was still standing. The holy city is consigned to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles for forty two months. It is a matter of history that the Roman army came and trod down Jerusalem. It may be remarked in passing that forty two months and its equivalent expressions are not to be understood as 1260 years. There is no truth in the theory that a day in prophecy means a year. That was the view of Wm. Miller who fixed the date of Christ's coming as 1843. Further we are told in chapter eleven that an earthquake caused one tenth of the city to fall. The expression implies that the city was still standing when John wrote. The same chapter predicts the murder of two witnesses in the street of the city where our Lord was crucified. Who those witnesses were we will consider in the proper place but the reference to Jerusalem is unmistakable. These references to Jerusalem, to the temple, and to the altar are natural enough on the view that John was writing before the advent of the Roman armies; but sound very strange if Jerusalem had fallen and the temple and altar were no longer in existence.

(c) In chapter seventeen we have mention of Rome as a great city that ruleth over the kings of the earth and sat on her seven hills. This is just old Rome which by the way exonerates the narrative from being a description of some supposed future "Tribulation." In connection with this city the writer mentions its dynasty of kings: "And there are seven kings, five are fallen, and one is, and the other is yet to come; and when he cometh he must continue for a short space."

Will this fit Nero's age? There is nothing it fits so well as the Caesar dynasty. Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, the five that are fallen; Nero the one that is; and Galba the other that is yet to come and which must continue a short space; the short space being about seven months. How does this verse cited fit the age of Domitian? It finds no historical parallel in Domitian's day. Now if there are only two alternatives and the date must be one or the other, then we have no hesitancy in saying that this text takes definite stand on the side of the Neronian date.

(d) In XIII:18, the number 666 is given as the number of the beast, which is also "the number of a man." This is easily derived from the familiar form, Neron Caesar, by adding the value of the letters composing the name. The person bearing the number is represented as a persecuting power making war upon the church and whose advances the church was being encouraged to resist.

(e) Furthermore other epistles of the New Testament seem clearly to refer to certain passages in The Revelation. If this is so, then Revelation antedated those epistles; and if their dates are approximately fixed then they limit the time in which Revelation could have been written.

Heb. 12:22 speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Rev. 21:2 shows the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "the first born written in heaven." Revelation says, "Written in the book of life." There are several such references.

II Pet. 3:10 "The heavens shall pass away."
Did Peter get that from Rev. 20:11 where it is said that the earth and the heavens fled away?

II Pet. 3:13 "We according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Where did Peter find that promise of new heavens and a new earth? Evidently in Rev. 21:1 "I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."

Then to complete the reference we learn from Rev. 21:27 and Rev. 22:14 that only the righteous dwell there.

Here then Peter refers to The Revelation, and if, as is generally conceded, Peter perished in the persecution under Nero, the book of the Revelation must have been written prior to Peter's death.

These considerations make it sufficiently clear that the book was written in the Neronian era and that it had special reference to the events of that day. In fact the purpose of the book was primarily to meet the situation that then confronted the church. It would be intelligible to the first readers and they would understand and be prepared for what they were to face, and this we may remark is characteristic of prophecy in general. Prophecy is not all enigma; it is revelation. It is true this is apocalyptic prophecy which adds somewhat to the difficulty of interpretation; but if we observe the great landmarks that have been indicated in reference to Nero, the Roman Empire, Jerusalem and Rome, we will not get lost in the labyrinths of typology.

When one returns to visit the scenes of his childhood after long years of absence, he may be even confused temporarily by the changes. The roads have been altered, the paths obliterated, trees cut down, forests felled, fences removed, and buildings destroyed. He exclaims in bewilderment: Why if I had been dropped from an aeroplane I would not know where I had landed. But no; there are the hills, the eternal hills; no woodsman's axe has leveled them, no transfigurer of landscapes has changed their configuration; they stand as great landmarks to identify the scene.

So, many features familiar to the first century have vanished from human memory. Idioms have been forgotten; the meaning of peculiar terms; the local colorings that were provincialisms; metaphors that had meaning once but forgotten now; the whole style and form of apocalyptic delineation; is it strange that occidental minds used to such different terms and forms should become mystified and confused? But keeping in mind the great landmarks will enable us to identify the time and place and features of the great scene with its complex details.

The eleventh chapter reveals the city of Jerusalem and the temple still standing; the seventeenth chapter shows Rome in her malignity to the Christian church, while the sequence of both chapters shows the judgment and overthrow of these two great persecuting powers, the first and the second great persecutors of the Christian faith. He who keeps these two great landmarks in his eye will not lose his way in the maze.

Much of The Revelation was future to John and the churches to which he wrote; but much of it is past to us. We must recognize however that The Revelation has some scenes of a final consummation. Its interest is not all local and historical. The local interests are but a part of the universal kingdom.

The gospels were concerned with local events as they set forth the life of Christ in his few brief earthly years, but their significance transcends all such narrow limitations of time and place.

The Revelation deals with much that was local and temporary but its spiritual lessons are for all ages. God's laws are ever the same. He will judge sin, and no nation will escape; not even the United States of America. And no individual will escape. The great judgment is set at the last day when all must appear, small and great, and be judged by the things written in God's books.

The end is consistent with the scope of the whole; the age long conflict between God and Satan; good and evil; the righteous and the wicked; the certain doom of all that is evil; and the certain triumph of all that is holy and good.

CHAPTER 1.

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

2. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

CHAPTER I.

V. 1. In the opening clause we are told what the book is,—A Revelation. It is not derived from natural sources, from history, from nature, from intuition, from the ratiocination of man, from any human or natural spring. But it is a **revelation** from God through Christ. The words “of Jesus Christ” refer to the **source** rather than to the **object** of the revelation. Those who make the purpose of the book to be a prophecy of the premillennial coming construe this genitive in accordance with their theory. But the plain and obvious sense is well expressed by Marvin R. Vincent; “Not the **manifestation** or **disclosure** of Jesus Christ, but the **revelation given by him.**”

Connecting the clause with the verb “to show” confirms the idea of source. “Which God gave unto him”—this is a divine book, and a part of the Holy Scripture. The revelation given to Jesus Christ shows the office of Christ as revealer of the Godhead. “Christ executeth the office of a prophet by revealing to us by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.”

“To show things which must shortly come to pass.” Some endeavor to limit this expression to chapters two and three. But since the same expression occurs in the last chapter of the book it is evident that it must refer to the bulk of the message. “Shortly” can mean nothing else but close at hand or very soon. With all allowance for linguistic flexibility and comparative lengths of periods, it would be stretching language to the breaking point to make shortly mean several thousands of years. Such interpretations are only trifling with words, and the word of God. The force of these words is decisive. The things that were to be shown in the visions were close at hand; they were to begin with the people to whom the book was

3. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

written and not thousands of years in the future. God is his own interpreter and must be allowed to say what He means, and what God says in explanation of his own prophecies must be taken in its obvious meaning and regarded as authoritative.

Origen introduced into the church an allegorical method of interpretation which is somewhat in vogue today. He taught that the Scriptures admit of a threefold interpretation, the literal, the ethical or spiritual, and the allegorical or mystical. The danger of allegorizing the Scriptures is evident. They are made to mean anything on the slightest pretext. This is the great danger today. Men read into the Scripture what is not there; and the imagery of Revelation affords them scope. Sound principles of interpretation were never more needed than now, and especially in the Apocalypse.

V. 3. "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear." Some would read and some would hear. Of printed Bibles there was none, and manuscripts were scarce. It was customary to have manuscripts read to the churches and frequently to circulate them among a group of churches; so that there would be many more hearers than readers. This manuscript was evidently sent to the churches to be read in their hearing.

"Blessed is he that keepeth" etc. Obedience is the ground of blessing. "For the time is at hand." Again the writer stresses the nearness of the events foretold. He says in effect: "Read and circulate this book quickly. Give serious heed to its warnings and admonitions. Get its courage and strength, for the times of judgment and martyrdom herein depicted are already at your doors." Those to whom this book was addressed were being forewarned that they might be forearmed.

4. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

5. And from Jesus Christ, **who is** the faithful witness, **and** the firstbegotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Vs. 4-8. These verses must be held together, and grasped comprehensively to get the proper view-point. "John to the seven churches which are in Asia." What he writes, he writes to those seven churches; and this includes the whole book rather than the two chapters of special messages. In the closing passage of the book, 22:16, he writes: "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches," thus embracing the whole book in his message to these churches. The rest of this passage to the end of the eighth verse is a characterization of Jesus Christ in his outstanding features as God and Saviour.

It is to show who is giving this revelation; what authority and power belong to him. It is holding before the minds of the readers and hearers Jesus Christ as our God, our Saviour, our Judge, and as the one in whose hands repose our welfare on earth and our destiny in eternity. Here in the beginning Jesus Christ is stressed with every exalted characteristic and prerogative; just as in subsequent verses 13-16, his peculiar relation to the church is set forth in the most striking terms.

Observe the range and significance of this characterization. "He was" before all worlds; "He is" living and reigning now; "He is to come" the judge of all the earth. Then follow his witness, his resurrection, his kingship, his atoning death, his power to reward, his everlasting glory and dominion, his coming again, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, which is and was, and is to

come, the Almighty. Here is the grand panegyric setting forth Jesus Christ as the source and authority in this revelation.

Now it is quite unscientific to take just one feature of this encomium and exalt it into the dominant note and specific purpose of the book of Revelation. A recent writer¹ says, "The salutation strikes at the outset the dominant note of the book. It is the note of **Christ and his coming**. Here is the theme of the Revelation in a nutshell. **The book has to do preeminently with the end of this present age, and with the coming again of Jesus Christ as the supreme and tremendous climax of the age.**"

All this is superficial and misguided, and misses the point of the whole book. It lacks comprehensiveness of grasp and **confuses a detail with the main purpose**. It makes an item of paraphernalia the guide and goal of interpretation. The coming is **one feature of the exaltation of the Revealer**, not a snapshot of the contents of the book. In verse seven we read, "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him; and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth (or tribes of the land) shall wail because of him."

What coming is here referred to? There are some who will refer this entirely to his coming to judge and destroy Jerusalem. And it is certain that the destruction of Jerusalem bulks more largely in the prophecies of the New Testament than our premillennial friends are wont to admit. The bulk of Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, concerns the destruction of Jerusalem. Moreover Christ said; "There are some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom," and "This generation (Christ's generation not some future one) shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." All this shows that Christ used this language to describe some near event which he called a "coming of the Son of Man." It may be so in this verse seven, "And they also which pierced him;" very probably many of his crucifiers lived to see the judgment executed upon Jerusalem. But while the New Testament recognizes these nearer comings, it also contemplates a final coming when the Son of Man shall "come in his glory" and judge all "nations" or people, and appoint their "eternal" destiny.

There are some trustworthy expositors who regard these verses as referring to both, the near and the final comings; the one suggesting the other as seems altogether probable in Matt. 24. In such case the imagery of the verse is borrowed from both. But if we concede that verse 7 refers to the final coming, and it may well be so, then it is just in line with the rest of this passage, showing Christ's great power and exalted character, and that he who will judge the world at the last day will judge the persecuting powers in that or any other age. This reference to the coming is therefore **one element** in the exaltation of the Revealer, but **not** "the theme of the Revelation in a nutshell." It matters not whether verse 7 refers to judgment on Jerusalem or to the final coming, its purpose is descriptive of Jesus Christ and **not** indicative of the purpose of the book to teach a pre-millennial coming.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." Christ was the beginning as Creator. He is the ending as Judge. This is more than antedating all created beings and outliving them all as the Arians afterward taught. It is exalting Jesus Christ as Lord. As the first chapter of Genesis sets God before and above all creation, so this first chapter is particularly employed in setting up Jesus Christ as omnipotent and Lord of all.

These Christians, many of whom lived in Christ's day, were not to think of him as once they had seen him, in hunger, and thirst, and weariness and weakness, arrested, fainting under the cross, crucified and buried; but as Lord of heaven and earth with all power in his hand, able to overthrow their enemies, able to deliver them from the fiery furnace, and exalt them to the throne of God. The day was not far distant if not already begun when they should face persecution and martyrdom. In such scenes they must not forget that this Jesus whom they professed was their Creator and Judge; and that their destiny and the world's destiny were at his supreme command.

9. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

11. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

V. 9. "I, John, your brother and companion in tribulation,"—that was a winsome address. He stood with them on common ground. Every hardship they bore, he endured. Every prospect of martyrdom they faced, he had already contemplated. He was even in the vanguard bearing the first baptism of fire and blood. They would listen to the words of one who suffered in their sufferings, and stood in the forefront of their dangers.

"Patmos"—a small rocky island off the coast from Ephesus, eight miles by one, fit place for meditation, with the sound of many waters ever murmuring on the rock bound shore.

V. 10. "In the spirit." We cannot describe this psychological state other than to suppose that all the channels of his being were open toward God, ready for the reception of any divine communication. Had he not been "in the spirit," but spending the holy day after the modern fashion, it is needless to say no voice or vision would have come to him. The man who is in the spirit on the Lord's day is the one who hears God speak and gets his message.

"The Lord's day,"—evidently the Christian Sabbath or the first day of the week, indicating what day the apostles observed.

V. 11. "What thou seest,"—evidently the visions which were about to be disclosed, "write in a book", this book we are now considering. "And send unto the seven churches,"—and here the specific seven churches of Asia Minor are given by name.

The book had some special application to the churches named, and to the conditions and circumstances in which they lived, and to those circumstances which they were soon to face. The book as a whole, not merely two chapters of it, was addressed to these seven churches.

12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

V. 12. "Seven golden candlesticks." We are told in plain language that these are symbols of the seven churches. Zech. 4 gives us the same symbolism; and Christ declared: "Ye are the light of the world."

V. 13. "In the midst one like unto the Son of Man." Christ is in the midst of his church. He is its life and power. He is not an absentee Lord. He is an abiding presence and personality. "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." Unless Christ is in the midst, the church is dead and shorn of power. This vision was of special significance and comfort to those churches in the scenes of blood thru which they were called to pass. In the burning fiery furnace into which they were soon to be thrown, there was One who would walk with them, whose appearance was like to the Son of Man.

V. 14. "His head as white as snow." Not age with its weakness and senility; but maturity and wisdom, purity and goodness. "Be ye holy for I am holy."

"His eyes as a flame of fire." No night so dark as to dim his vision. No path so tortuous and crooked that he cannot follow it. No secret so hidden that it does not blaze before him. No heart that he does not read like an open page. No deed so buried that it does not stand out before him. Nothing so forgotten that it will not come to light. That eye sees through everything.

V. 15. "Feet like molten brass." Strength and majesty are in his going forth. Feet swift to girdle the earth; tireless to stride down the centuries; strong to trample down all his enemies.

"His voice as the sound of many waters," Sweet and low as the brook that sings its way through the meadow, or filled with majesty and grandeur as it speaks the language of judgment and fear, as the roar of the angry surf

16. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

as it thunders upon the shore. For those who hear not the one, Christ reserves the other. There are such contrasts in Christ because there are such contrasts in men.

V. 16. "In his hand seven stars." We are told what they mean; the messengers or ministers to the churches.

"Out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword." Observe that the sword was in his mouth, not in his hand. Christ's weapons, by which he conquers the world, are spiritual; not carnal. Christ conquers by his word, not by armies with guns. This imagery corresponds with Paul's who says: "The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." We find this sword again in the nineteenth chapter proceeding out of his mouth by which he subdues and conquers his enemies. When Christ leads armies with a sword in his mouth, it is the triumph of the gospel.

"His countenance as the sun shineth in his strength." Let the churches know that their Redeemer is mighty and glorious; that his rule is from sea to sea and from pole to pole, and therefore they need not fear the conflict, nor doubt the final outcome.

Vs. 17-18. John fell at his feet as dead; and Christ said: "Fear not I am the first and the last, he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." I was dead; but I am dead no more. I have "the keys of hell and of death." Nothing can happen without me. Splendid encouragement! Who would not be under such a captain and follow such a leader?

V. 19. "Write—things seen,—things which are,—things hereafter." The events which this book contains were, some of them, already transpiring; some in the very near future; some in a distant and far distant future.

20. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

V. 20. "The mystery." This introduces the explanation of the mystery. Chapter 17:7 says, "I will tell thee the mystery." Scattered through the book are hints as to the meaning of its symbolism. We need not be in much doubt where divine guide-boards are given. It is well to observe them. Better indeed than to resort to conjecture and impose self-made or preconceived theories. These land marks are God's own guide-posts; they are therefore trustworthy and authoritative. He has blazed the trail through this wilderness of type and symbol. If we observe the marks we can follow the path.

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." Angels no doubt in the sense of messengers or ministers; not angels in the ordinary sense of that word. Their office determines their nature. Since they are intermediary, not between God and John, but between John and the churches, we infer that they are natural and not supernatural beings. They were simply seven men through whom John communicated with the churches above mentioned.

"And the seven candlesticks are the seven churches." Plain language this. No room for doubt or speculation. This is divine commentary. Due observance of such explanatory helps scattered through the book, will assist us to a sensible interpretation of The Revelation.

Thus the first chapter ends having given us the source and authority of the revelation, the glory and power of the revealer, and the help and hope of the church in all her fiery trials. Thus the stage is set for the scenes that are to follow.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter begins the messages to the seven churches. Each had need of instruction, advice, warning, promise, and encouragement. These seven churches were the field of John's oversight. Ephesus, the capital of the Roman province "Asia" was John's home in his later years, and the center from which he superintended the adjoining churches. In making an itinerary of these churches, one would travel in a curve much resembling a horseshoe. Starting with Ephesus and traveling north forty miles, one comes to Smyrna for which the Greeks and Turks have lately been contending. Then going sixty miles farther north, we find Pergamos. These one hundred miles constitute the west side of the curve. Then the course leads thirty miles eastward to Thyatira, thence southeast, through Sardis and Philadelphia, to Laodicea; the eastern side being slightly longer than the western. How often John made this itinerary, what experience he had, what dangers, hardships, sorrows, triumphs, and joys,—all this affords scope and theme for lively imagination.

There were other cities and churches in that region; e. g., Colosse,—but they do not come within the range of this book. These cities and churches were well known in John's day though most of them have perished long ago. Who founded them we do not know. We know that Paul passed through Asia Minor and dwelt at Ephesus, though nothing is said of his having founded these churches. But in subsequent years they evidently came under the supervision of John.

These messages are just plain letters to the seven churches with their consequent lessons to all churches in all places and times. Some extravagant notions have been entertained in regard to these messages. Dr. C. I. Scofield says: "The messages to the seven churches have a prophetic application, as disclosing seven phases of the spiritual history of the church from, say, A. D. 96 to the end. It is incredible that in a prophecy covering the church period there should be no such foreview. These messages must contain that foreview if it is in the book at all; for no

church is mentioned after 3:22. These messages do present an exact foreview of the spiritual history of the church and in this precise order. Ephesus gives the general state at the date of the writing; Smyrna, the period of the great persecutions; Pergamos, the church settled down in the world "where Satan's throne is," after the conversion of Constantine, say A.D. 316. Thyatira is the Papacy, 500 to 1500 A.D. Sardis is the Protestant Reformation whose works were not "fulfilled." Philadelphia is whatever bears clear testimony to the Word and Name in the time of self satisfied profession represented by Laodicea.

"It would seem from this that Laodicea represents the present day of lukewarm and indifferent church membership, and being the last of the seven, we are therefore at the end of the age in dire apostasy."

If Dr. Scofield finds such a scheme in these chapters, he must have use of a microscope that ordinary men do not possess. This is all sheer invention. By these methods one can prove anything; and find anything in the Scriptures whether it is there or no. Such interpretations are almost as rationalistic as the rationalism they condemn. A recent writer gives us an example in his reference to Joseph: Joseph is a type of Christ; He marries Asenath, a type of the Gentile church. This occurs before Joseph's brethren arrive in Egypt and become reconciled to him; thus the conversion of the Gentiles must precede the conversion of the Jews which will occur only when they meet Christ at his second advent. To make such far-fetched arguments, is the extreme of allegorical interpretation. We might proceed with this kind of argument and say that since Joseph died and left his brethren in bondage, therefore the conversion of the Jews will result in their servitude to Satan;—a *reductio* and *absurdum*, but quite as legitimate.

The arguments to prove this typical view of the seven churches, are entirely inconclusive. The number seven; the similarity traced between these churches and the ages they are supposed to represent; the increasing strength of the promises given to the faithful in the latter group of churches,—all this proves nothing, or at least is inadequate to validate the interpretation.

A recent Premillennial writer has said that there are difficulties in this view. He should have said that the chief difficulty is that there is not one syllable in the whole book of Revelation that says any such thing. It is not evident that the promises climax in the latter churches of chapter three. Similarities may be traced between these churches and almost any kind of human institutions. Of course we can find a likeness between the luke-warmness of the church today and the luke-warmness of Laodicea which Christ was ready to spew out of his mouth. And the luke-warmness of today is just as abominable as that of Laodicea, and Christ is just as ready to spew it out of his mouth now as then. But while there are these similarities and these lessons that are eternally true, we are not to read the whole history of the world into these seven churches.

And while the word 'church' may not be found in chapters four and eighteen inclusive, yet the church is there as really as if mentioned by name, woven into the narrative and represented by symbol.

CHAPTER 2.

1. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

THE MESSAGES.

1. Ephesus.

Vs. 1-7. Ephesus, once a leading scene of Paul's ministry, became the home of John, and there tradition locates his sepulchre. He strikes a note of commendation by telling them that they have had their trials with those who said they were apostles and were not and found them liars. These were evidently the same class of Judaizers that opposed Paul, and if so, this is evidence of the early date of the book. They met this difficulty and survived, to their praise; but "thou hast left thy first love." They were in some measure, backsliders. This was their sin. It is a sin of this age as well; and Ephesus has its similarity to our own age as well as Laodicea. And if they are backsliders they will not stand the trial that is coming upon them; and accordingly the Revealer says: "Repent or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of its place." Observe that here is a **coming** which is not the technical second coming; and every judgment is a coming.

The candlestick was removed and the church of Ephesus perished. I have no record how soon that happened, but we know that for centuries that once proud city has been a ruin. Backsliding will prove fatal to any church.

8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Ephesus speaks to us. The church cannot commit suicide and still live. Besides there are a score of agencies at the throat of the church ready to destroy her when she slips from the protection of the God who upholds her.

2. Smyrna.

Vs. 8-11. Smyrna is still a city. It has been called "the beautiful," "the Paris of the Levant." This church receives commendation. It had some trials and met them. "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." Judaizers they were no doubt; evidence that Jerusalem had not yet fallen since the Judaizing activities had not yet ceased.

"The devil will cast some of you into prison and ye shall have tribulation." Polycarp, the martyr, was bishop of Smyrna. The prophecy came true and no doubt in many more instances unrecorded. In addressing this church, Christ gives himself the title, "the first and the last which was dead and is alive." Perhaps this was to present the Christian fact in opposition to the fable that the idol Dionysus at Smyrna had been killed and came to life again. The practical lesson to observe in closing is that this city which had a faithful church was saved from destruction. Smyrna still stands.

12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, **even** where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas **was** my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

3. Pergamos.

Vs. 12-17. The church at Pergamos had "held fast my name and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr who was slain among you." The deluge of fire and blood had already begun. The Roman persecutions were making themselves felt to the boundaries of the empire, and these churches were facing a period of trial the worst they had ever known. In the next few years they would see such convulsions and tribulation as the world had seldom witnessed, if ever. The first baptism of blood had already fallen upon the church at Pergamos.

"But I have a few things against thee," eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication. Heathenism was saturated with immorality; even their worship; and converts were easily seduced. If they ate things sacrificed to idols that would be a stepping-stone to heathen associations and idol worship, and thus would they be drawn into its shameful immoralities. Christ would indeed have something against them if they should tolerate that; and therefore warns: "Repent or else I will come unto thee quickly,"—that is, to judge their sins.

18. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

19. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

20. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

25. But that which ye have **already**, hold fast till I come.

26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28. And I will give him the morning star.

29. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

4. Thyatira.

Vs. 18-29. Thyatira, the home of Lydia, Paul's first convert in Europe, still exists as a small city of perhaps twenty thousand inhabitants. It is supposed by some that Lydia may have carried the gospel to her native town; but of this there is no certainty. There was something to approve at Thyatira. "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." 'Works' is mentioned first and last in the list, and the "last was more than the first." That is her last works were more and better than her first. Instead of retrograding from her first love and first works as Ephesus did, there was progress and commendable growth in Christian service.

But, "I have a few things against thee—that woman Jezebel." Jezebel the wife of Ahab was bad in character and bad in influence seducing Israel to idolatry. This woman of Thyatira was called Jezebel for similarity of character and influence; that is, she was a second Jezebel. Pretending to be a prophetess or teacher, she was a bridge from the church to the temple of idols and the practices prevalent there. It is scarcely possible that the term indicates a collection of prophets, using the feminine for a plural.

The Alexandrine and Vatican manuscripts make "that woman" read, "thy wife." Whose wife? If this is the true reading, it would naturally imply the wife of the messenger or minister, the one to whom the message was addressed or by whom it was sent. It is quite possible, in the circumstances of mixed social life that the minister or messenger might have a heathen wife; and her influence in the church, with which she would necessarily come in contact, would seduce to idolatry and to the immorality associated with heathenism.

"I gave her space to repent and she repented not." Therefore judgment is determined upon her, for an example to all the churches. But while the wicked shall meet their doom the faithful shall gain their reward.

The tutelary god of Thyatira was the sun-god represented by rays of light and feet of burnished brass. Accordingly Christ introduces himself as one "having eyes like unto a flame of fire, and feet like fine brass;" and promises to him that overcometh: "And I will give him the morning star."

1. And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

CHAPTER III.

This chapter continues the messages to the churches; four have been considered, three yet remain.

5. Sardis.

Vs. 1-6. Sardis, the capital of Lydia, the citadel of the world famed Croesus, has fulfilled the prophecy that "the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." Sardis and ruin are synonyms. Sardis was a church well nigh apostate when John wrote. This is the church which, in Dr. Scofield's scheme, represents the "Protestant Reformation." Is Protestantism apostate? Is this age degenerate till there is no hope of betterment, and nothing to be expected from the Christian church?

A writer in the Century Magazine of 1921 says: "The muckraking of the pulpit and the pew is the crying need of this age." Dr. Scofield flaps the raven's wing, and the Century Magazine discloses the venom of an enemy.

But Sardis was sadly degenerate. No conflict is discovered with foes within or without. The church had ceased to witness sufficiently to excite the opposition of the enemy. There was no occasion to persecute a church that had given up her testimony.

7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Observe that the city that had an apostate church is conspicuous for its sad and silent ruins. Therefore that civilization will perish that does not maintain the church in its purity. The city or commonwealth or nation that neglects or abandons the church and its worship of God has doom written across its face. But there was sufficient life left in Sardis to merit an exhortation and warning. "Hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." God's judgments are swift and unexpected. "The feet of the avenging deities are shod with wool."

But there were a few faithful "even in Sardis." God does not leave himself without a witness, and the gracious Lord does not overlook the faithful few among the many apostate. Their names are in "the book of life", and "they shall walk with me in white."

Christian life and character are possible in difficult places. Let no Christian give over his effort because of the unfriendliness of his environment; nor fail in faith and faithfulness when all is dark and discouraging.

6. Philadelphia.

Vs. 7-13. Here is a church on which Christ bestows unmixed praise. She had "little strength"; few in numbers and poor in resources. The vicissitudes of the city, because of earthquakes in the lava formation, perhaps kept them in poverty. But poor in this world's goods they were rich toward God. Continued dependence on God and his providence is fruitful of trust and fellowship. Observe again that this town whose church was the salt of the earth has withstood the vicissitudes of the ages and exists today a monument of God's protecting power. Christ's promise to it was: "Because thou hast kept my word I will keep thee from the hour of temptation which will come upon all the world."

9. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

14. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Philadelphia had her trials from that same "synagogue of Satan" that troubled Smyrna; but the crowning triumph of her piety and faithfulness is expressed thus: "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The power of their testimony and the piety of their lives conquered and won their enemies. What triumph could exceed that? The earnest, faithful, godly church will not be without her fruits in the conversion of the world. To such a church the Lord has presented "an open door."

7. Laodicea.

Vs. 14-22. Laodicea receives no commendation. She is not hopeless, but indifferent. However indifference is next to hopelessness.

The city of Laodicea, named for Laodice wife of the Seleucid king Antiochus II, was noted for the wealth of its citizens; who were able to rebuild the city without government help when destroyed by an earthquake. Accordingly the deceitfulness of riches choked the word that

18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

it became unfruitful. The church of Laodicea stood in contrast to that of Philadelphia in point of wealth, and also in point of devotion, piety, and service. Their worldly wealth led them to think that they were "rich and increased in goods and had need of nothing." Spiritually they were "Wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

The hot and cold springs of the locality doubtless gave rise to the simile of the water. Christ's judgment upon them was: "Because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot I will spew thee out of my mouth." No more scathing denunciation has ever been launched upon any church than this upon the church of Laodicea. Their self-satisfied content was most distasteful to their Lord. They thought themselves the opposite of what they were. To be sick is bad enough; but to be sick and deluded is well nigh fatal. Would this denunciation disillusion them? Would they accept reproof from their Lord? Would they heed the injunction: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich?"

We are not ready to concede that Laodicea is a prophetic foreview of some particular age; but the lesson of Laodicea is a lesson to any church in any age that sinks to Laodicea's unspirituality. The church that is half on and half off is an abomination in the sight of God in that, or this, or any age. "Be zealous therefore and repent" is a pertinent exhortation to most churches in all the centuries of Christian history.

“Behold I stand at the door and knock.” Dr. Scofield heads this: “The place and attitude of Christ at the end of the church age.” It is the attitude of Christ in any age.

These were the messages. Were words ever spoken more encouraging to those who heed and more terrible in denunciation upon the faithless and lukewarm?

Two peculiar things about these messages deserve attention. Each one begins with some phrase applied to Christ in the first chapter. For example: “These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars”,—“he that hath the sharp sword”,—“he that hath eyes like a flame of fire” etc.

Again each message closes with a promise “to him that overcometh.” Namely, “I will give to eat of the tree of life;” “I will give to eat of the hidden manna,” “I will give him the morning star;” “I will give power over the nations;” “make a pillar in the house of God;” “grant to sit with me in my throne,” etc.

We may recognize in closing that these messages not only dealt with conditions in the churches, but in doing so were preparing them for scenes through which they were soon to pass in the cataclysmic events connected with the destruction of the Jewish state. Thus they are fraught with watchful and wise solicitude for the endurance and triumph of the churches of Asia in the tribulation of their day.

CHAPTER IV.

Chapter four begins a new section of Revelation. This section terminates with chapter eleven which reaches the climax at that point with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the judgments upon the first great persecutor of the Christian church. Some interpreters carry the seventh trumpet on into the subsequent chapters and make it include the seven vials; but such a view is unwarranted and not based upon the text. Chapters four and eleven inclusive, constitute a section with a definite objective.

It is necessary at this point to consider a scheme of interpretation imposed upon these chapters and including subsequent chapters to the nineteenth. Much is being written and spoken on the book of Revelation, most of it unwarranted by the plain facts in the book itself. The Premillennial teaching in conferences, schools, classes, and publications seeks to inculcate a peculiar view of Revelation. We have been told that the seven churches of Asia prefigure seven periods of history from Christ's day till the end of the age. That Laodicea, the apostate church, represents the age before Christ's advent, and that we are now in that period. Coming to this fourth chapter we are told that chapters four to eighteen inclusive, describe, what the Premillennialists call the Tribulation period, supposed to be seven years.

At the beginning of the fourth chapter, that is previous to the Tribulation, Christ will descend into the atmospheric heavens, then will occur the Rapture, all the righteous dead will be resurrected, and ascend into the air and remain with Christ in the air during those seven years. This period will be a time of tribulation on earth, for the unbelieving Jews and the wicked that remain; and that these chapters, four to eighteen inclusive, describe that period, with all the judgments that will be poured out upon the earth. The reasons assigned for this view are:—

1. That the word church is not found in these chapters and therefore the church cannot be on earth during this time.

2. It fits the scheme by standing between Laodicea in the third chapter, which they conceive as an apostate age, and the nineteenth chapter which they interpret as the Second Coming.

3. Thus we get a program of the ages, and if this is not the scheme intended, then we have no such program.

As to these arguments, we remark that while the word church is not found in these chapters, the church is found as we shall see when we come to study them. The word God is not found in Esther, but who would say that there was no God in the time of Esther or in the events of Esther's history, for God is through and through the book in all the providences recorded.

As to a chart of the ages down to the end of the world, we have no such chart in detail, and if Revelation be such, it is quite exceptional in the analogy of prophecy.

While we have some hints given as to the course of future ages, we have not so much of a chart nor the kind of a chart that the Premillennialist asserts. But moreover in these chapters we find Jerusalem, and the temple, and the altar, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish state as the first great persecutor of Christianity. That event was future to John and the people to whom he wrote, but is past to us.

Again we find in these chapters the overthrow of old pagan Rome, called the city that sat on seven hills, the second great persecutor of the Christian church. This is so plain that no man can miss it unless he closes his eyes or wears colored spectacles. John describes that Roman empire as far as his own time by five kings that had fallen, one that is, and one yet to come;—clearly the Caesar dynasty up to John's time or to the fall of Jerusalem.

Now if the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of Rome are in these chapters, they are **not** the description of some period yet to come, and the whole scheme that would put these chapters thousands of years after the days of Jerusalem and Rome is wholly fictitious.

We need to hold the above facts clearly in mind as we pursue the study of this book. To hold the salient features as indicated will save one from being warped in a general estimate of the book of Revelation.

CHAPTER 4.

1. After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

2. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

4. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

We now come directly to Chapter four.

V. 1. John's vision begins with a door opened into heaven;—looking into heaven. The vision he sees is introductory to what follows. He is now preparing his readers for the immediate and main purpose of his writing. The immediate purpose is to meet the moral needs of God's persecuted people, not to amuse them with splendid pictures, not to sketch a scheme of world events, but to lift their hearts and thoughts above the deadly decrees of tyrants, and their souls above the fear of prison, sword, and stake.

A voice said, "Come up and I will show you things that must be after this." The words "after this" imply soon after.

V. 2,3. He saw a throne and one sat on it, brilliant as precious stones, and a rainbow round the throne. It was not said, who that was, but there can be no doubt.

V. 4. Here are twenty-four seats and twenty-four elders in white garments and wearing crowns of gold. Who are they? Well, we see that they offer intelligent worship, they explain certain things to John, they are personal beings, but not angels. Since they sing: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," we conclude they are saints, or representatives of those saved by Christ's blood. This is a vision to comfort those who might find themselves faced with sudden prospective sainthood. We think these visions had a definite reference to the people to whom they were addressed and to the conditions in which they lived and especially in view of the circumstances they were soon to face.

5. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and **there were** seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6. And before the throne **there was** a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, **were** four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7. And the first beast **was** like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast **was** like a flying eagle.

8. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about **him**; and **they were** full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

V. 5. Seven lamps are before the throne. In 1:4, the lamps are the churches, but here they are said to be the seven spirits of God. It is important to observe that symbols are not always uniform.

Vs. 6-8. John next sees four beasts full of eyes before and behind, bearing a general resemblance to a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle. Each has wings and eyes, and they rest not day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, etc." Our first impression is that here is all animate creation worshipping God. We like to think of all nature animate and inanimate praising God in every sound and motion. What a chorus of praise! Brook, and bird, and bee; and flower; thunder, and wind, and ocean, and mountain, all in glad-some harmony hymning God's praise. But beautiful and appropriate as that suggestion is, it can hardly sum up this symbol.

The word translated 'beasts' should be rendered "living ones;" not as though they were wild beasts though they are living, but higher beings by far. In eleven, or more, other places in Revelation they are mentioned and their employments shown.

They worship; they do service; they say at various times to John, 'Come and see'. Therefore we look upon them as personal beings, angels, or archangels around the throne.

9. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Vs. 9-11. These living ones give glory and honor and thanks to him that sits upon the throne; and the twenty four elders representing the redeemed of earth, fall down before him that liveth forever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne saying: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." God as Creator is sovereign and omnipotent.

So the chapter closes with a great outburst of praise to God, who is all in all in heaven and on earth. God has created them all, and his very creation of them expresses his desire for their good, and happiness, and as well his authority over all, and his power to bless and save, and do them good. In his hands who can harm?

This is John's first vision in this series. It is a vision of heaven and of God. That is a good starting-point. From this standpoint we see all things in a right light, and estimate all things at their proper value. And if these early Christians were being called to face persecution, prison, fire, and death, we can appreciate the appropriateness of this introductory scene to steady them in their approaching baptism of blood. God is their God and Creator, and all blessing, and all destiny rest with him. It is well to remember, in addition, as we go through this book, that John is seeing these visions in heaven even though they have to do with earth and time.

1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

CHAPTER V.

Chapter five opens with a scene in heaven.

V. 1-6. John sees in the hand of him that sat on the throne a book, or rather a roll, written within and on the back side and sealed with seven seals. The book in the hand of God corresponds with the first chapter that this was a revelation given by God.

Heaven resounds with a voice: "Who is able to open the book." This book was a revelation of things to come. Several times we have been told that things will be revealed that must shortly come to pass. Here was the future, to some extent at least, wrapped in the roll.

Who will open the book? One came forward, called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and John was told that he had prevailed to open the book and to loose the seals. This can be no other than Jesus Christ. Christ is the revealer. He reveals God and his will. He is prophet, as well as priest and king; and he executes the office of a prophet by revealing to us the will of God for our salvation.

No sooner is he called a lion than he is also called "a lamb as it had been slain." He is described as having seven horns and seven eyes; the horns indicating strength and the eyes, knowledge; and the further explanation given,— "which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Almightyness and omniscience are here involved.

7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

We find in these chapters a great many sevens; seven lamps, seven churches, seven horns, seven eyes, seven spirits, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, etc. The bible makes much use of the number seven which is usually regarded as a sacred number, and sometimes as a number of completeness.

However I do not think it legitimate to draw from all this that the world of mankind is to last seven thousand years. The author of "Dispensational Truth" has schemed human history into seven periods of one thousand years each; and assumes that we are now six thousand years from Adam, and that the millennial period of one thousand years is presently upon us, at the close of which our earthly history will end.

Such schemes are not justified by anything that we know. We do not know certainly that we are six thousand years from Adam. And besides the division into historical periods of one thousand years each is artificial and man-made; and the Lord has not told us so definitely as this just how long the world is to last.

Vs. 7-14. This Lion-lamb came and took the book from the hand of him who sat upon the throne; and the heavenly beings fell down before the Lamb with harps and golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of saints. The prayers of God's people on earth seemed to have something to do with the revelation about to be made. The prayers of agonizing saints in the throes of bloody persecution come up to God's throne; and in answer thereto the Lamb has taken this book of destiny to reveal to them that God will judge their persecutors and lead his church to triumph.

11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

And they sang a new song. They had sung an old song in Rev. 4:11 praising God for creating all things; but now a new song of redemption saying: "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." Two good songs!—praise to the Creator and praise to the Redeemer. The song ends by saying: "And hast made us (or them) kings (or a kingdom) and priests unto God; and we (or they) shall reign (or do reign) on earth." The manuscripts are very uncertain on this text, but it shows, at least, that God's cause will not always be persecuted and cast down; but will arise and grow and triumph on earth. That would be good news to the poor persecuted churches of that day. The chapter ends with a hallelujah chorus.

CHAPTER 6.

1. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

3. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4. And there went out another horse **that was red**: and **power** was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and **see** thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

7. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8. And I looked, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

CHAPTER VI.

Vs. 1-8. The Lamb successively opens four seals, and there come out in order four horses and their riders; one horse white, one red, one black, and one pale. Here are the four horses of the Apocalypse, a phrase recently made popular.

The first rider had a bow and a crown and went forth conquering and to conquer. This was conquest by military power. We consider this figure entirely different from the rider in the nineteenth chapter who went forth with a sword in his mouth and who conquered by the power of the word.

The second, a red horse and rider, represented war. The third was famine. A measure of wheat, about a quart, for a penny, a days wages, indicates scarcity. So does the reference to the oil and wine. Scarcity is always the effect of war. The fourth horse and rider symbolized death. The text declares the identification.

These four are an inseparable quartette; conquest, war, famine, death. Where you find the first you will find the other three.

Now in interpreting these symbols the question naturally arises, do they refer to world history in general, or to some specific time? And, if to any specific time, what time is referred to? Well it is always true that where there is worldly conquest, there is war; and where there is war, there follow famine and death. There can be no doubt that this is a true description of conquest and war whenever and wherever observed. Yet no doubt this series of seals had some specific reference to times that concerned John and the churches addressed.

There has been wide diversity of opinion as to the specific times represented by these seals. Some have fixed the point of the first seal several centuries in advance of the time of the writing; and then assumed that the seals were successive, and made them cover each its period of centuries far down into history, and some to the end of the world.

Many commentators have been wont to find in the book of Revelation at this point and other points the history of their own times or recent times. Many have professed to find a considerable amount of European history in the book of Revelation, especially the persecutions of the Papal church directed against the Reformers, and particularly involving the Waldenses and the Albigenses. The Papacy has come in for a good deal of comment from this book of Revelation. We doubt if it is by any means legitimate as a matter of strict interpretation. Even though the Papacy may have enough sins to answer for, it is more than doubtful if they are in this book by way of definite mention.

Others put these events, represented by the seals, in a future time, not yet come to pass; assigning them to the end of the age or the last times. This would make them have no practical reference to the age in which they were written, and remove them far from the times and circumstances of John and his churches and the churches of his day. There are good reasons for thinking that they were addressed to the churches of that day, because they had

direct reference to the times and circumstances in which they lived and suffered, and call up situations that existed then and never afterwards.

Moreover there is no reason for assuming that these four seals or four horses are successive events to the extent of representing successive ages. It is not true to fact that conquest comes in one age, war in another, famine in another, and death in another. They all belong to the same age; they are parts of the same affair; they all go together, conquest, war, famine, death. And if these symbols point to any specific time there is every reason to believe that they point to the very period in which John was writing and in which his churches were living; and that they had specific reference to the last days of the Jewish state, at the destruction of Jerusalem. They were just then facing the very things which these horses represented. This is evident because:

1st. The declaration had been repeatedly made that this revelation concerned things that must shortly come to pass.

2nd. Christ, in Matt. 24, Mk. 13, and Lk. 21, had described the wars and desolations, the pestilences, famines, and earthquakes that should precede the fall of Jerusalem; and John and Christ are evidently describing the same events, to happen at the same time, on the same city, and in nearly the same terms. And Christ had said that "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." A recent writer has recognized that Christ and John are describing the same events but strangely assigns them to a future period called the Tribulation. Due heed to the wording of Luke's account would have saved him and others from making such a blunder.

3rd. These scenes lead up to and culminate in the eleventh chapter where we find the temple and altar measured and the holy city trodden under foot. That ends the seals and the trumpets that came out of the seventh seal, and marks a division of the book, at the end of the eleventh chapter. Now if this series of visions culminates in the fall of Jerusalem, then we think the time is thus definitely indicated.

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

4th. The calamities that came on the Jewish people, their city, and land, were awful and terrible enough to be described by these striking symbols and by the more glaring descriptions to be found at the end of the chapter.

There is no period of history that so literally fulfills these events, as the destruction of Jerusalem. When men put them away in the future they only assert something that is incapable either of proof or disproof. Josephus has written the history of those times, without knowing these prophecies, and he has written such a fulfillment of them as shows very clearly that the history was the fulfillment of the prophecy.

That Jewish war broke out in 66 A. D. It is doubtful if any thing before or since has equaled it for ruthless slaughter, and merciless destruction. From the locality of these churches in Asia Minor to the borders of Egypt the land was a slaughter house. City after city was wrecked, sacked, and burned; till it was recorded that cities were left without an inhabitant.

Christ had said: "There shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be." Thirty five thousand Jews slaughtered on the streets of Caesarea. Besides the cities of Asia Minor and Judea, we are told that fifteen strong cities of Galilee were taken by storm and the masses of men, women, and children butchered.

When the Roman armies invested Jerusalem, three millions of Jews had crowded into the city to celebrate their annual Passover. Scarcely as many thousands escaped. We are strongly disposed to feel that the events justified this lurid prophecy.

We have run a little ahead of the exposition, for the strongest words are at the end of this chapter which we have not yet reached in our expository remarks.

Vs. 9-11. The fifth seal was opened and John saw the souls of those slain for the word of God, and the testimony which they held. Where were they? Under the altar in heaven, which doubtless means at the foot of the

10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

12. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

altar. Who were these martyrs? The saints that had recently fallen in the persecutions; very likely Antipas, from the church of Pergamos, being one of them. What were they doing? Praying and saying: "How long dost thou not avenge us and punish these murderers on earth?" which would indicate that these persecutors were still alive on earth. It would seem to them, and naturally, that truth was being destroyed; the church killed; and every thing that was just and right was being outraged, and the people of God suffering as if God had forgotten. So they pray: How long, O Lord, how long?

How was their prayer answered? White robes were given them showing that they had conquered and were approved; and perhaps this suggested that their cause on earth would likewise eventually triumph. But they were told that it would be a little while yet before judgment fell on their persecutors, and that a few more martyrs would fall and join them before the carnage would cease. This would be assurance both to those in heaven and on earth, that although the persecution was severe, it would be short and their triumph sure. Christ had already said: "For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Vs. 12-14. The sixth seal was opened and there was an earthquake; the sun became black; the moon became like blood; the stars fell; the heavens departed as a scroll; and the mountains and islands were moved out of their places. All these signs had been used by the Old Testament prophets, and were not new as symbols of prophecy. And we may add that nearly all the visions of the Revelation borrow their imagery from the Old Testament, and this is some help to their meaning.

15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

It may doubtless be taken for granted that these convulsions of nature were seen in vision and are not to be looked upon as actual occurrences. As no one would assume that the four horses actually rode over the earth, but were symbolical representations of things that were to happen, so these convulsions of nature were probably to be understood in the same way; that is, not a prophecy that the sun would literally grow black, and stars fall, and islands and mountains be moved. Yet even such things could be, and maybe some of them did happen in earthquakes and cosmical changes, in that time, and may happen again. Yet perhaps more probably, these convulsions of nature were projected in the vision, in order to portend convulsions of another kind among men. Striking and terrible things seen in the visions foretold striking and terrible judgments upon the wicked persecutors of the church. And I am not sure but that it is a feature of Biblical symbolism to make sun, moon, and stars, and such phenomena to represent the strong social and political powers, or men in high places like kings, princes, or priests, or high officials of church and state. And in confirmation you will notice that the following verses refer to just such men, as if to be a sort of commentary on these symbols. And so these convulsions seen in the vision might reasonably refer to the breaking up of the strong political combinations of that day, and the fall of those who stood at their head.

Vs. 15-17. These verses close the chapter and complete the vision. John saw that the kings, great men, rich men, mighty men, bond and free, hid themselves in the dens and mountains, and cried to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of him that sat on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?

The persecuted Christians had often been compelled to flee and hide, as many did, in dens, and mountains, and in the catacombs; but now the tables are turned and the persecutors are fleeing and hiding.

This may have been intended as an encouragement to the suffering saints of John's day, to show that their time of triumph was approaching. But if any one thinks that this description is too terrible to apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to those historical events, I will just remind him again that it was as terrible a thing as the world has known. And if any one thinks that this symbolism outstrips the event, and must apply to the final judgment at the end of the world, then I may further remark that it is also a feature of prophecy that it sometimes looks beyond the near judgment or event as if the near had suggested the remote. It may be so here. It is possible that the vision looks away off beyond the events at Jerusalem to the final judgment of the world. And yet it is quite probable that these startling symbols, and more startling descriptions, may all refer to the terrible events that were ready to break upon the heads of the people of John's day, and in the sight of the churches to which he wrote. But of this we may be sure that if God did not withhold judgment then, he will not do so now or ever. All sin and sinners must face the wrath of the Lamb, and all combinations of wicked men shall go down as did those wicked persecutors of Christ's church in the days of John. The Lord reigneth and he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

CHAPTER 7.

1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

CHAPTER VII.

We have been considering the opening of the seals. The first four seals gave us the four horsemen, signifying conquest, war, famine, and death. The fifth seal showed us the souls of saints at the altar in heaven. The sixth seal was followed by convulsions of nature.—earthquakes, falling stars, etc. We have not yet come to the seventh seal, and it does not immediately follow. The seventh chapter comes in as an episode or interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. This interlude, the seventh chapter, has its own special purpose. There was evidently a reason for inserting it here before the seventh seal. The six seals have been of a terrifying character. This interlude chapter is of a very different nature. Its effect would be to give encouragement and assurance to the suffering saints on earth. It brings out the safety of God's people, and the blessedness of those who have gone through fire and blood to a martyr's death.

Now what is this seventh chapter? The first half is the sealing of 144,000 of the children of Israel.

Vs. 1-8. Four angels were standing on the four corners of the earth holding the four winds. This shows that all the agencies of nature, all the instruments of judgment, are in God's hand. Not a wind can blow, not a storm can strike, not a judgment can fall, but by his permission. He says to the sea: "Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." And when Satan afflicted Job he could not go one iota farther than God permitted him. And as this storm of persecution falls upon the early church, and as this period of judgment falls on the persecutor, and as this period of danger and dissolution engulfs the lands where the

4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: **and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.**

5. Of the tribe of Reuben **were sealed twelve thousand.** Of the tribe of Gad **were sealed twelve thousand.**

6. Of the tribe of Aser **were sealed twelve thousand.** Of the tribe of Nephthalim **were sealed twelve thousand.** Of the tribe of Manasses **were sealed twelve thousand.**

7. Of the tribe of Simeon **were sealed twelve thousand.** Of the tribe of Levi **were sealed twelve thousand.** Of the tribe of Issacher **were sealed twelve thousand.**

8. Of the tribe of Zabulon **were sealed twelve thousand.** Of the tribe of Joseph **were sealed twelve thousand.** Of the tribe of Benjamin **were sealed twelve thousand.**

churches are located, every lash is in God's hands and every life in his care. That is what the church needed to know in that hour when convulsions worse than earthquakes were about to shake the social and civil fabric to its center.

And so it was commanded: "Hurt not the earth nor the sea until we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads." And 144,000 were sealed. It cannot be admitted that Jews alone constituted the servants of God. If the servants of God were to be sealed it must have embraced vastly more than the Jews. However at that particular time the Jews were the special objects of hatred, and the carnival of slaughter that ensued especially involved the Jews, and myriads of them were butchered without mercy. In these circumstances the danger to Jewish Christians was particularly great. This was true not only at Jerusalem but in all of those cities where the conflict raged. The Jewish converts would be subject to danger not only from those who hated the Jews, but from the persecution of the Jews themselves. So here we have this vision of a great multitude of Jews who have accepted Jesus Christ as Messiah and are sealed by God as his servants. That just 12,000 from each tribe are sealed shows that the number is not to be taken literally, but representatively. John the Baptist and Christ and his apostles all preached to the Jews up and down Judea and Galilee. And the command of Christ on the eve of his ascension was to "begin at Jerusalem." And when Paul went on his missionary journeys he went first into the synagogues and preached Christ. Here then are the results of the gospel among the Jews of that day.

9. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands:

10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell down before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

The purpose of this seal or mark in their foreheads was that they might not be destroyed in the coming judgments that were to fall. A similar scene is recorded in Ezekiel 9, where men were marked in their foreheads and were not to be slain in the devastation of the city, according to the vision of Ezekiel. And when we come to the ninth chapter of Revelation and the plagues have fallen we will see that they were commanded to hurt only those who had not the mark of God in their foreheads. So that the evident purpose of this vision of sealing was to assure God's people of divine care. This was a vision. The mark was God's mark, not man's. It was not for the observation of human eyes, but was a revelation to God's people of his providential disposition of all their affairs.

It is further to be noticed in this connection that when Jerusalem was besieged by Roman armies, the Christians escaped the slaughter by a most remarkable providential circumstance. I take it that this vision of sealing referred to the affairs of the church on earth; but when we come to the second half of the chapter we have a scene staged in heaven.

Vs. 9-17. Now John sees a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. John was informed that "these are they that have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," etc. This scene shows the blessedness of the saved and especially of the martyred dead, who came out of great tribulation, and is in happy con-

13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14. And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

trast to the sad and somber pictures of Judgment that preceded and that are to follow. This seventh chapter is the happy episode or interlude between the sixth and seventh seals, and between the scenes of judgment which they portray.

It has been thought by some that the terms used to describe this multitude are too inclusive or universal to fit the historical view of these chapters. In answer it may be said that the terms used to describe the multitudes that were in Jerusalem at Pentecost were almost as universal; for it is said that there were Jews from every nation under heaven. Besides it is not necessary to assume that the vision was limited by the age of the world and the progress of the kingdom up to that date; but that the vision might fitly convey an idea of the consummation of Christ's kingdom as an incentive and encouragement to the church on earth in the times of its trial, and in all times.

CHAPTER 8.

1. And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

2. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

V. 1. The seventh seal is opened and there is silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. It is the lull before the storm; it is the suspense of dread before the breaking out of some great and portentous event. There is a sense of something great and fearful about to happen. One holds his breath in the intensity of expectation.

V. 2. John saw seven angels to whom were given seven trumpets. The trumpet was a signal of battle in Israel. They were told to blow the trumpet for alarm when faced with foes. When Jereboam attacked Judah the priests blew the trumpet and God gave Judah victory. These trumpets may well indicate God's war against his enemies. But yet the trumpets are slow to sound. There is still another halt. God is never in a hurry to smite; he is long-suffering and slow to anger.

Vs. 3,4. Another angel appears with a censor and much incense, and offers it with the prayers of all saints. And the smoke of the incense and the prayers of the saints ascend up before God. This is not the first time we have met the prayers of the saints in this book. In the sixth chapter we heard them pray: "How long, O Lord, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" That is upon their persecutors and the persecutors of the church. At the cry of God's people God will avenge. This scene shows that God will hear their prayers, vindicate their cause and overthrow their enemies.

5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood;

9. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

10. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

12. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

V. 5. And the angel took the censor, filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it into the earth, and there were voices, and thunder, and lightnings, and an earthquake. Which evidently showed the immediate answer to their prayers. And then the angels prepare to sound, after these careful deliberate preliminaries, which seem to point to the magnitude and solemnity of the events. Observe that this falls under the seventh seal. The seventh seal did not bring on the earth any single event, but only disclosed the seven trumpets, and the trumpets are the signals of the events on earth.

Vs. 7-13. These verses give us the sounding of four trumpets. As the four seals had a similarity in the four horses, so the four trumpets have a similarity, and may be considered together. At the sounding of the trumpets certain plagues fall. The first plague fell on the land; the second on the sea; the third on the rivers; and the fourth on the heavenly bodies. And each plague destroys one third of what it touches. One third of the trees are burned; one third of the sea becomes blood; one third of the rivers and fountains become wormwood; and one third of the day and night are deprived of light.

13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

It is useless to attempt to attach these trumpets to successive periods of history, and say that the first applies to so many centuries and the second covers so many centuries and so on. Some have tried to do that, and labored to show what periods of time each one covered; but with no satisfactory results. It is much better to regard them as all belonging to one time and one event, namely the destruction of the first great persecutor of the Christian church. Christ, in speaking of the fall of Jerusalem, described it in sufficiently alarming terms; and history fills out the event of about ten years before the fall of the city with scenes of crimes, and terror, robbery, and murder, and carnage sufficient to justify such symbols as these.

CHAPTER 9.

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

2. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

6. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

CHAPTER IX.

V. 1. The fifth trumpet sounded and John saw a star fall to the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. This star is not a literal star; this is symbolism too. Immediately a personal pronoun is applied to that star; "to him" was given the key. This indicates that some personality was represented by that star. It may have been some angel, or some minister of religion like the high priest, or some body of religious teachers that spread unbelief, heresies, false principles that wrecked men's morals and the safety of society. How disastrously the leader of religious life could do this!

Vs. 2-12. And this personage, whoever he was, opened the bottomless pit, and there came out dense smoke that darkened the sky, and locusts with the power of scorpions. And they were enjoined not to hurt grass or tree but only the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads. It will be remembered that we have just seen, in the seventh chapter, that the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads to save them from the judgments; and now their exemption is commanded.

9. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

11. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

12. One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

I think two things are evident here. As these servants of God were evidently living on earth in John's time, and this judgment exempted them, therefore these judgments fell in John's time and not thousands of years later. Again it seems reasonable to suppose that this flood of locusts that came out of the bottomless pit were moral and spiritual errors. That was doubtless the reason that the servants of God were not hurt by them. They were taught by the Spirit; they were grounded in the truth; they were sealed to God; they were proof against heresies and moral and spiritual perversion. It would be quite true that moral and spiritual perversion would have physical results. And it is also true that in the siege of Jerusalem social and civil safeguards were thrown to the winds; and as if they had gone insane, as if possessed with devils, father was set against son and son against father, brother against brother till the inside of the city was a seething hell, and its deliverance impossible. When men's senses and reason and conscience are taken away, when mental and moral and spiritual aberration seizes men, their ruin is certain and near. The statement in verses five and ten that these locusts were to hurt men five months, may grow out of the fact that the life of a locust is about five months; and from the other fact that this terrible condition was short. It could not last long. Doom was near.

The locusts are further described as being like horses prepared for battle, with faces of men, hair of women, teeth of lions, wings that sounded like chariots, tails like scorpions, and stings in their tails,—the very agglomeration of heterogeneous features making the picture more terrible.

And they had a king over them, the angel of the bottomless pit, called in the Hebrew, Abaddon; and in Greek, Apollyon. This is Satan; and so it appears that the Devil

13. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand; and I heard the number of them.

17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

himself was the tormentor of those who followed him. But that is his business and such are his methods. The wages of sin is death.

Vs. 13-21. The sixth angel sounded the sixth trumpet, and when the trumpet sounded a voice commanded the sixth angel to loose the four angels that are bound in the great river Euphrates. The river Euphrates was the boundary between Israel and her ancient captors. It was across the Euphrates that Assyria came and carried Israel into captivity. And it was across the Euphrates that Babylon came and carried Judah into captivity. The great conquerors of Palestine and Egypt had come across the Euphrates in ancient times. It might well have an uncanny sound. This was at least a suggestion of conquest. The narrative goes on to say that the four Euphratan angels were loosed, and the number of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand. Thus without any explanation of these four angels a great army of horsemen are introduced and described showing that this symbol meant war.

Now it is not certain whether this great army represented confederates of Rome that came from the east and assisted Rome in this Jewish war, or whether it has a general reference to the Roman armies only. That perhaps is not essential. But the vision portended war; and war in such gigantic proportions as to overwhelm completely the Jewish state. Two hundred thousand thousand horsemen would be of course impossible; but the number is impressive enough and was doubtless meant chiefly for impression.

18. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19. For their power is in their mouths, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear nor walk:

21. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

In this great army, the horses are described, but almost nothing said of the riders. The riders have breastplates of fire, jacinth, and brimstone; but the horses have heads of lions; fire, smoke, and brimstone issue from their mouths, and their tails were like serpents, with heads, that could bite. It has been supposed that this vision of cavalry would be very terrifying to the Jews, because they were not accustomed to use cavalry in warfare and had suffered in times past from this mode of warfare.

The chapter closes by saying that the men who suffered from all these plagues did not repent of their sins, but continued to worship idols and even devils; the most offensive idolatry known to the prophets of God. The apostasy that refuses to repent, after all warnings, after preliminary judgments, has only one end, and that is destruction. And that end will surely come though God bear long with them.

Old Antiochus Epiphanes, the worst persecutor the Jews ever had, whose memory was a nightmare, when afflicted with a dreadful disease, humbled himself and called on God, and declared if God would heal him he would himself become a Jew and proclaim God's mercy before the world. But these apostates of whom John writes did not repent though doom stared them in the face.

This is a warning to all men to be sensitive in regard to their own sins; to heed God's warnings, and to repent and seek God's mercy. It is always a safe thing and a wise thing to repent of sin. The practical lessons of Revelation are many and forcible. With all its symbolism and mysteries, it deals with the vital things of human destiny.

CHAPTER 10.

1. And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

2. And he had in his hand a little book open; and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

CHAPTER X.

This chapter is the prelude to the end of this section. The section ends with chapter XI. The opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets have led up to the final scene in this part of Revelation; and the tenth chapter is preliminary to the culmination. It is to be observed that we have come to the last seal which bound that book which was put into the hand of Christ as the opener. The last seal issued in seven trumpets; and six trumpets have sounded and but one more remains to sound. We are still, however, among the events of the sixth trumpet.

V. 1. A mighty angel comes down from heaven. Heretofore the standpoint of the visions seemed to be in heaven; now it seems to be earth. This angel comes down to earth. Who is this angel? I take it that this angel is Jesus Christ himself, because of the description of his having a rainbow upon his head; his face as the sun; his feet as pillars of fire. One will recognize some of these features as being ascribed to Christ in the first chapter. There is no difficulty in his being called an angel; Old Testament usage has justified that.

V. 2. He had in his hand a little book open; rather opened. Considerable interest attaches to this book. What was this book? Why was it opened? Why called a **little** book? What did it contain? What relation did it bear to the book put in Christ's hand in the fifth chapter? Was it the same book or was it a new book comprising the prophecies in the last half of Revelation?

Evidently the reasonable explanation is that it was the same book that we saw in the fifth chapter sealed with seven seals; or rather what is left of it. The seven seals have been opened, so this book appears **opened**. We are now in the seventh seal that disclosed seven trumpets and we are in the events of the sixth trumpet. So therefore

3. And cried with a loud voice, as **when** a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

but little remains of the contents of that book and it is now described as 'little.' We are almost at the end of this series of visions. Let this be duly observed for it is a very important point in the proper understanding of the whole book of Revelation. The revelations of that book that was sealed with the seven seals evidently ends with the eleventh chapter; and the disclosures of the second half of Revelation are otherwise provided for.

Now we see Christ come down with that same book in his hand with every seal opened to declare that the time is up; and the prayers of his saints are to be answered; and the blood of his martyrs judged or avenged; and the last great catastrophe shall fall on the first great persecutor of the Christian church.

Vs. 3-4. These verses tell us that the bearer of this open book cried with a loud voice and seven thunders uttered their voices. The seven thunders uttered something in words, for John was about to write it, but a voice from heaven told him to seal them up and not write these things which the seven thunders said. No doubt they were too terrible to write. Their ears and hearts are to be spared the description. And we will find in the next chapter that when the end of this scene comes we are spared the description of the carnage and massacre and madness of that last scene. We are told in brief words what fate was to befall the altar and temple and city of Jerusalem. And we are told the purpose and the spiritual results; but all the sickening details are omitted. These very soon became a matter of history, and John did not need to write them in detail.

5. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

6. And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

Vs. 5-6. These verses tell us that this heavenly messenger lifted up his hand as he stood upon the sea and upon the earth, and swore by the Creator of the universe that time should be no longer. This cannot mean that all time was at an end. On no scheme of interpretation could that be true. The rest of the book is full of events that are yet to come. But the meaning is that no more time could be given these sinners on whom this judgment was to fall; no further delay till the final stroke should descend. The Lord had delayed his judgments long; he is long suffering and slow to wrath; but the time had now come and no longer delay would be granted.

V. 7. We are here told that when the seventh angel sounds, and it will be soon, he is just about to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished; not all mystery, but as he hath declared by the prophets, doubtless here it is the judgments long foretold against Jerusalem for her apostasy and persecution. For such prophecies see Isaiah 65, 66 and Daniel 9:26,27.

Vs. 8-10. Here we are shown that John, at the command of the voice from heaven, takes the book from the angel's hand and eats it. In his mouth it was sweet and in his belly it was bitter. There were some things glad and some things sad in the events revealed in that book, and about to be revealed. It was a matter of gladness that God heard their prayers and answered their cries, vindi-

11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

cated their cause, and destroyed the persecutors. But it was sad that men did not turn from their sins, sad that such judgments must fall, sad that the altar and temple and city and state so much revered should come thru the sins of men, to such a sad end.

V. 11. "And he said to me: 'Thou must prophesy again before (or rather concerning) many people, nations, tongues and kings.'" Though this book was ended and all its seals opened there would be other things to follow and we will see that this was true in the next half of Revelation.

CHAPTER 11.

1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

CHAPTER XI.

V. 1. John is given a reed and told to measure the temple and altar and worshippers. Why should he measure them? What was meant by this act? In the Old Testament measuring is sometimes associated with destruction as in 2 Sam. 8:2, Amos 7:7,8, and Hab. 3:6. But sometimes it foretokens a rebuilding as in Ezek. 40 ff., and Zech. 2:1. But what does it mean here? It is impossible to regard it as a sign of rebuilding for the second verse and elsewhere in this chapter we have the destruction of the city. While it may be regarded as a measuring for destruction, another view, perhaps as plausible, is that it signified the preservation of all that was good and true about the city and temple; the sifting out for salvation of some elements even in a wicked city ripe for destruction. This is supported by the fact that the worshippers are also included in the measuring. It is not very important which of these views we take. But what is important immediately follows.

V. 2. John is told that he need not measure the court which is without the temple for it is given to the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty-two months.

Here is so plainly the destruction of Jerusalem that it could hardly be put in plainer words. It seems evident that there is no getting away from the fact that here we are dealing with the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70,—that all that John has said hitherto was leading up to this great fact,—that here we have the culmination of these prophetic seals, and this is where the first half of the book lands us. Here, as we open this chapter, is Jerusalem, still standing. Here are the temple and altar in the midst of it. This forever and absolutely precludes the idea that these events are to happen thousands of years in the fu-

3. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

ture. It matters nothing what other men may say, this is what John wrote; this is what Christ revealed; this is what the Bible says; and that is final.

This incidentally shows when John was writing; while the temple and city still stood, before they had been destroyed, or about the year 66.

We read that the Gentiles shall tread the city down forty-two months. This is not to be taken as 1260 years by making every day mean a year. That method of interpretation has little to recommend it. I know of no reason why a day should mean a year or why God should obscure his prophecies by such enigmatical methods. But the times and half a time, the three and a half years, the forty-two months, the 1260 days, are all the same and mean just what they say. Here the forty-two months or three and a half years evidently refers to the time of the siege, sack, and pillage of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. We first find this term in Daniel when Jerusalem was oppressed three and a half years by Antiochus Epiphanes, and the term may have taken on a symbolical meaning expressing a period of oppression. It was exactly the time of Antiochus' outrages, and approximately, at least, the time of Rome's active operation against Jerusalem.

Vs. 3-12. This is a passage that has puzzled many. Two witnesses prophesy 1260 days, the same forty-two months or three and a half years. They have great power to stay the rain, and turn water to blood, and smite the earth with plagues. But when they finish their testimony the beast from the bottomless pit kills them, and their bodies lie on the street of that city where our Lord was crucified. There is no doubt therefore with what city we are dealing. People are glad they are dead and rid of

7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. *

11. And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

their testimony; but after three and a half days they are resurrected and ascend up into heaven in a cloud. This is a highly figurative passage and while it means something, is to be taken symbolically rather than literally.

Who were these two witnesses? That is a question often asked and deeply pondered. Now we are obliged to John for dropping a hint that gives the clue. The meaning often lies on the surface while we read right over it and fail to notice it. The hint to which I refer is found in the fourth verse: "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." But that is familiar language. Where did we hear that before? Go back to Zech. 4, and you have the reference. There Zechariah has a vision of two olive trees pouring oil into a lamp and he asks: "What are these two olive trees on the right and left of the candlestick?" And he is told: "These are the two anointed ones that stand before the Lord of the whole earth." Whatever slight differences there are in the two accounts they are evidently the same thing. John's vision reproduces Zechariah's, and whatever Zechariah meant, that evidently John means. Now as we study Zechariah we find that he means by these two figures the head of the state and the head of the church. Both of these had great power and authority over the hearts and minds and lives of men. Civil and religious authority go far to restrain the evil passions and deeds of men. And in the social and civil convulsions that

13. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15. And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

destroyed Jerusalem when the Jewish state was crushed, when the temple was burned, and the leaders of state and church were slain, it would look as if the power of law and religion had perished; and the witnesses to social order and moral restraint were slain. And there were men then, and there are some still, who are glad when all authority and restraint are dead, and anarchy and license revel rampant.

But things can't last that way. Men must revert at length to law and order and moral restraint. No society can endure without legal and moral safeguards. And so the witnesses are resurrected. Anarchy may last for a little while, and the wicked may rejoice; but government and religion can't stay dead. Their resurrection is certain, and that after a very short reign of terror. And that is what we think is meant by these two witnesses. They may be thought of as personifications, or as personal representatives of religion and government. But John says: "These are the two olive trees," and Zechariah supplies the explanation.

Vs. 13-14. Here is mention of a great earthquake. One tenth of the city fell and many were killed and some were affrighted and gave glory to God. This continues the terrors in the city's destruction. The second woe is past and the third woe cometh quickly; which evidently refers to the utter and final overthrow of the city. The details are not further given. They are sealed up like the voice of the seven thunders. It is sufficient to call it woe, and it is perhaps kind to leave the rest undescribed.

Vs. 15-17. And the seventh angel sounded. Whether the last crash of judgment on the doomed city fell at the sounding of this seventh trumpet or fell with the last woe of the sixth trumpet, is not of much importance. The six

16. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

17. Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

trumpets may have been sufficient to describe the catastrophe, or maybe the final climax at the end of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh may be sealed up in the voice of the seven thunders. Be that as it may we have here, in the final delineation, the results and effects of the preceding events, of the treading under of Jerusalem. This may indeed be all that the seventh trumpet was intended to reveal, that is, the moral and spiritual outcome when the persecutor was destroyed.

Now we are shown a scene in heaven; when the seventh angel sounded and the stroke of divine judgment had fallen, then there were great voices in heaven saying: "The kingdom of this world has become our Lord's and he shall reign forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders fell on their faces and worshipped God." Here is the exultation of heaven over that which has taken place on earth. But how does this fit in with the view that we have been dealing here with the overthrow of Jerusalem? We will see, I think, that this is a proper climax and a proper result. In verse 18 the elders go on to say: "And the nations were angry and thy wrath is come." Jerusalem had stoned the prophets as Christ said, then crucified the Lord of glory, and later persecuted and martyred the apostles and saints, and now "thy wrath is come and the time of the dead that they should be judged." Not all the dead as if this were the final judgment at the end of the world, (we will find that at the end of chapter 20) but this refers to those martyred dead who had fallen in the persecutions. In chapter six we saw them under the altar in heaven praying: "How long O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and **avenge** our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Now here it is said, 'And the time of the dead is come that they should be judged or **avenged** and that thou shouldst reward thy servants that fear thy name.' They were assured in chapter six that it would be yet a little season and now that little season has run, the doom has fallen on the persecutor, or as here said, that thou "shouldst destroy them that destroy the earth."

18. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth.

19. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Now this does fit in with the overthrow of Jerusalem. Heaven rejoices that the persecutor of the saints is no more. The first great opposer is swept away, and "the kingdoms of this world,"—no, rather the rule or sway of this world belongs to Christ. Now the kingdom was really given to Christ at his ascension; but two things had to happen before it was rightly on its way as a world conquering power. The first was spiritual, the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost; and the second was physical, the breaking down of the barrier of Judaism in the fall of the first great opposer. Then Christianity became a world religion.

V. 19. And the temple of God was open in heaven and in it the ark of his testament and there were lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, and great hail. These were the echoes in heaven of the smash and crash and cataclysm that had occurred on earth. Elsewhere in Revelation where thunders and lightnings and earthquake and hail, etc. are visioned, they are tokens of judgment and so evidently they are here. The judgment had fallen. Jerusalem was trodden down.

This ends the first half of the book. It culminates in the destruction of Jerusalem as the first great persecuting power against the infant church. Then after this the book moves on to the destruction of Rome as the second great persecuting power as we shall see in subsequent chapters. That this is the true view of the book must be evident to all who have followed this exposition with any degree of comprehension.

We have seen how it was addressed to the people and churches of John's day as a stimulus and encouragement to them in the trying scenes which they were facing. We have heard John say that these things would shortly come to pass, but he never says it would be a long time.

We have seen how the martyred saints in heaven were assured that it would yet be just a little season till their martyrdom was avenged. We have seen how the culminating events were located in Jerusalem, described as the city where our Lord was crucified. We have seen that the altar and temple and city were standing and then it was given over to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles for three and a half years.

We have seen the armies described in terrible imagery that came to besiege and destroy. We have seen the moral and spiritual aim or purpose or result that the rule or sway or sovereignty over this world belongs to Jesus Christ. The very outcome of this series of visions shows the impotence of puny man to oppose the onward march of the kingdom of Christ. He will overturn and overturn till he reigns whose right it is.

If this is not the true interpretation of this book, then we may despair of finding one. How could the facts and events which we have passed in review fit any other mould than that which has been given? This is the plain sensible view of the book as evidently indicated by the writer himself who penned these prophecies. And if this is the true view, then all other views are logically ruled out; for there can be only one true view however many imaginary views there may be.

CHAPTER 12.

1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

CHAPTER XII.

We have now come to a new section in the book of Revelation beginning with chapter twelve. The preceding section, chapters four and eleven inclusive, is ended. The seven seals are all loosed; the seven trumpets have all sounded, and what they signified has now been disclosed. These all portended the destruction of Jerusalem as the first great persecutor of the Christian church. That climax has been reached; and all that was meant by the seals and trumpets has now been revealed; and with the ending of the seals and trumpets that section of Revelation came to a close. In a little booklet, by J.H. McConkey, we find the writer connecting the seventh trumpet with the seven vials of subsequent chapters so as to make the seventh trumpet include the vials; but there is no ground in the book of Revelation for such a position. The two series are distinct as the two historical situations are distinct, and the line of cleavage is here between the eleventh and twelfth chapters.

The next section begins with chapter twelve and ends with chapter nineteen. And as the last section dealt with the first great persecutor, this section on which we are entering deals with the second great persecutor, Rome.

Vs. 1,2. There appears in the prophet's vision a wonderful woman; clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. Who is this woman? We will understand that better when some other features of the vision are brought before us. In the meantime keep in mind, who was this woman? This woman was on the verge of motherhood. Some notable one was to be born of her.

3. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

Vs. 3,4. And there appeared a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns on his heads. His tail drew the third part of the stars, and did cast them to the earth, and the dragon stood before the woman to devour her child as soon as it was born.

There is no difficulty about the identity of the dragon, for in verse nine he is described as "the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan." That settles who he is.

"His tail drew a third part of the stars,"—fallen angels perhaps, or wicked men in high places. That they followed his tail may be an expression of contempt for the foolishness and baseness of their allegiance. At least he went before and they followed. And there are men as well as fallen angels that are assiduous and devoted followers of the Devil's tail; and they follow the Devil's tail more readily than some nobler and worthier leader.

Now the Devil was quick at strategy, and designed to destroy the woman's offspring as soon as it was born. He was early on the job, to gain the first signal advantage and forestall all comers. But there is one quicker and mightier than he for whom the Devil is no match; as we shall see.

V. 5. "And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up unto God and to his throne." It is at once recognized who this child was. Who is to rule all nations but Jesus Christ? The words "rod of iron" are taken from the description of Christ's rule in the second psalm. And that this child was caught up to God and to his throne describes Jesus Christ and no one else.

6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Now we are ready to say that the woman, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, represents the church of God. The twelve stars may have reference to the twelve tribes of Israel. The true Israel, the Zion of God, gives us the incarnate Christ. Out of the bosom of the church comes Jesus Christ into the world as the promised Messiah who was to be the "seed of the woman."

V. 6. "And the woman fled into the wilderness where she hath a place prepared of God." Since the Devil could not destroy Jesus Christ he could still persecute the church. This indicates the condition which the church has to face and is the forecast of the scenes that are to follow. Persecution is the Devil's work from the beginning, and the church early felt his power. But God is the protector of the church and has her safely provided for; "a place prepared of God where they should feed her 1260 days. This 1260 days is a term borrowed from Daniel where it was a period of persecution, and has become the symbol of any period of persecution. And as long as the Devil persecutes the church the Lord will protect and feed her. Thus early in this section we have the outline of the story, the persecution of the church and the divine protection and deliverance. The completed section will fill in the outline.

Vs. 7-12. There was war in heaven and the Devil and his angels were cast out. And a voice said: "Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12. Therefore rejoice ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

We have little knowledge of the Devil's relation to space and place or whether he can appear in heaven or not; but we remember in this connection that in the prologue to the book of Job we see Satan presenting himself before God and accusing Job. This seems to be a similar representation. And here the old accuser is cast out. We remember again that Jesus Christ said just before his death and resurrection and ascension, as he looked forward to them, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the Prince of this world be cast out;"—Jno. 12:31. Again when the seventy disciples reported the success of their preaching mission, Christ replied: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven;"—Lk. 10:18. So the meaning here seems to be that the resurrection and ascension of Christ was the staggering blow to Satan's kingdom, and foretold the ultimate overthrow of his power. When Christ arose from the dead and ascended to the throne of God it was eviction-notice served on Satan. Verse five gave us the scene of ascension and the following verses give us the victory and prelude of coming victories consequent upon that ascension. It is the aftermath of Christ's victory from the time of his ascension with which we are dealing here.

V. 13. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child." Since he could not destroy the omnipotent Son of God he persecutes the church to show his hate toward Christ and every thing that is his. And here we have the church in this part of Revelation, if not by name, in adequate description at least, being further described in verse seventeen as the remnant of the woman's seed "which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16. And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 14-17. And the woman is given the wings of a great eagle to fly into the wilderness where God has a place to protect and nourish her. The Lord provided a way of escape for the persecuted church, which lifted it out of the reach of the Devil's power. The Devil is represented as a crawling serpent; but the church as flying on wings.

Then the serpent cast out of his mouth a flood of water after the woman to carry her away with the flood. But he fails again. The earth helped the woman by opening her mouth and swallowing up the flood. God is never short of means. All the resources of earth and heaven are at his command. Here we see how the providences of the world are on the side of God's church. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, which may refer to the storms that helped Israel win her battle; and here the earth puts forth her helping hand to save God's people and God's cause. The God of the church is the God of nature, and the God of providence; and he can command them in any exigency that may arise.

The closing word of the chapter is that "the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed." The following chapters will show some of that warfare as it pertains to the next period of the church's life. The twelfth chapter has been setting the stage for the next era of persecution, which we are now ready to consider. The twelfth chapter began by bringing Christ upon the scene as the Messiah born of the woman. It proceeded to show the design of Satan to destroy the Saviour of the world. But Satan's efforts proved futile, for Christ was taken up to God and to his throne. Then Satan turned his attention to persecuting the church; and the next chapter continues the story.

CHAPTER 13.

1. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

2. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

CHAPTER XIII.

Vs. 1,2. John stood on the sand of the sea and saw a wild beast rise up out of the sea; but though it rose out of the sea its description shows it to be a land beast, and not a sea monster; for it was like a leopard with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion.

It had seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads names of blasphemy, significant of its evil nature. This description indicates a civil power; and the visions of Daniel have made us familiar with such imagery representing great world powers.

What power is represented by this beast? We are not left in doubt about this. We have in chapter seventeen an inspired explanation of the symbols used in these visions. When God gives us the key to the meaning we need look no farther, nor invent meanings different from those supplied by our divine guide. There it is made very clear that the beast is the Roman empire. The seven heads are said to represent both the seven hills of Rome and the seven emperors that ruled; which seven emperors they were we shall soon discover.

Here in the second verse we are told that the dragon, the red dragon of the last chapter who was the Devil and Satan, gave the beast his power, and his seat, and his authority. The Devil had gone to make war, or to persecute the seed of the woman which keep the commandments of God. Accordingly he does it through this great world power, the empire of Rome. Rome becomes the Devil's agent. History tells us of the persecutions of Rome; how Paul was beheaded, and Peter crucified head downwards; how the Christians were thrown to the lions, exposed to the cold, drowned in rivers, thrown into cauldrons of boiling oil, daubed with pitch and burned for

3. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

torchlights; how every conceivable torture was inflicted on them; how all the might and power of the Roman empire were exerted to extirpate them, till the church at length conquered its persecutor. The story of Justin Martyr, the story of Polycarp, the story of Origen and a thousand others, the history of the catacombs, and the history of the Roman dungeons will all tell, how the dragon, the Devil, gave his power to the Roman empire to do his persecuting work against God's people.

V. 3. "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed." This further serves to identify the beast with Rome; and also to locate in time some of these important events.

Chapter seventeen shows us that there were seven kings and that they were successive; for he says, "five are fallen, one is, and one is yet to come." If this is the Caesar dynasty, as it evidently is, then the head, or king, with the deadly wound was clearly Julius Caesar the founder of the empire. And the wound of that head, the killing of Julius Caesar, did not kill the beast at all; the deadly wound was healed. Though Julius Caesar was killed as a protest against autocracy, it did not destroy it in the least; the empire lived on, and Julius was followed by other Caesars more autocratic than he would have dared to be. The deadly wound was healed and the beast lived on to do the Devil's work.

V. 4. And they worshiped both the dragon and the beast, saying, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" How the world worships power and sides with the strong!

7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindred, and tongues, and nations.

8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9. If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

But were the emperors of Rome really worshiped? Gibbon, the historian of Rome, is authority for that fact. And another historian asserts of Caligula, one of the seven emperors, represented by these seven heads: "he began to regard himself as something more than a mere mortal, and to claim divine honors; and finally he erected a temple to himself and instituted a college of priests to superintend his own worship." And so John goes on to say, in verses 5, 6, that he spake great blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

Vs. 7,8. The beast made war with the saints to overcome them, and all shall worship him whose names are not written in the book of life. All the wiles of the Devil and the power of the persecutor will not cause the true Christian to sink into apostasy. He endures to the end. He is faithful unto death. The name that is written in the Lamb's book of life will never be blotted out. See John 10:28,29.

These words were written to those who lived in the midst of some of these persecutions. It would encourage them in facing the struggle to know that God would not suffer them to be overcome. And it is equally as good a lesson today.

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
He'll never, no never, desert to his foes.
That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake,
He'll never, no never, no never forsake."

V. 10. "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." Here is the irony of fate. A man reaps what he sows. God's retributions are sure whether they be swift or slow, and they are generally swift.

11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns, like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

Vs. 11-14. John saw another beast coming up out of the earth having two horns like a lamb. He does not look fierce and terrible like the first beast; he is somewhat like a lamb. But he is not as innocent as he looks; his mild look was just the sheep's clothing that covered the wolf; he had only borrowed the livery of heaven to serve the Devil in. He does great wonders and works great miracles,—makes fire come down from heaven. Thus he deceives people and leads them to worship the beast whose deadly wound was healed.

This second, lamblike, beast supports and promotes the power of the first beast that had the seven heads and ten horns. "He spake like a dragon," "he exercised the power of the first beast." He works to continue and exalt that first beast; no doubt by promoting idolatry, king-worship, and blasphemy against the true God.

Who or what is this beast? As the first beast was a civil power, this beast is evidently a religious power. He is lamblike in outward aspect, works miracles, and makes an image to the beast. This suggests religious activities. And so this second beast is rightly recognized as the Pagan religion or pagan priesthood. This Pagan religion supported the imperial power. It helped to hold up the hands of the emperors. It supported the civil authority, and especially lent its aid in the persecution of the Christians, and the Christian church. Thus it served the cause and power of the first beast.

I may mention another view of this lamblike beast that has had considerable prevalence. Many interpreters have made this second beast to be the Papacy. They would find Popery or Papal Rome in this dragon-beast

15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

that wore the appearance of a lamb. Now we have no desire to excuse the Papacy; it has sins enough to answer for, and I am not for whitewashing its record, nor shutting any ones eyes to its dangerous power; yet I think an accurate and careful interpretation will not warrant us in identifying this second beast with the Papacy. It is all a matter of sound interpretation. And just as I repudiate the Premillennial interpretation of these chapters as inaccurate and impossible, so I decline to make this beast signify the Papacy; because it does not fit the case nor the place. These two beasts that persecuted the church were contemporaneous as has been clearly seen; but the persecutions of Pagan Rome and the persecutions of Papal Rome were a thousand years apart.

The beasts in this chapter **co-operate**. The second beast **supports and magnifies the first**. But we cannot say that Papal Rome was the upholder and supporter of the old dynasties of Pagan emperors. All history vetoes such a conclusion as that. Papal Rome did become a persecuting power; but not in conjunction with the old Roman empire; but centuries after Pagan Rome was dead. So however much we would like to castigate the Papacy, and however much she deserves it, the principles of sane and sound criticism will not furnish us an opportunity in these chapters of Revelation; for Pagan Rome and Papal Rome were never contemporaneous and co-operative.

But if this lamblike, dragon-speaking beast is not the Papacy, it certainly does fit the case and place of the Pagan religion of old Rome, which supported the imperial power and abetted the persecutions of the early Christian church.

V. 15. Here we are told: "He had power to give life to the image of the beast and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." The Pagan religion gave animus to the persecution of those who did not worship at the heathen shrines, and was hand in glove with the civil power in persecuting the Christian church.

16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Vs. 16,17. And he put a mark in the hand or foreheads of men so that no man could buy or sell unless he had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. This was to boycott or ostracise the Christians, and deprive them of the common rights of citizens, or the common rights of humanity. The pressure of economic distress was to be laid on them to compel them to conform.

V. 18. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man (or a man's number); and his number is six hundred three score and six." This number 666 is called the "number of the beast," and also "the number of a man." It is quite plausible that as the beast is the Roman empire, the man that is thus co-ordinated with the beast is the man who stands at the head of the empire as ruler or emperor. That would be the most likely ground of identification. The emperor stands for the empire and his number is 666.

Now it is a well known fact that both in Greek and Hebrew the letters of the alphabet stand for certain numbers, or have certain numerical values. In Hebrew the first letter, Aleph, is one; the second, Beth, is two; and the tenth is ten. But the eleventh is twenty, the nineteenth is one hundred, and the twentieth is two hundred, etc. See "A Grammar of the Hebrew Language" by William Henry Green, page 3.

Thus a man's name in Hebrew would result in a certain number by adding together the values of the letters composing the name. Now it is very significant that if we take the name of Nero in Hebrew, in the form in which it is often found in Hebrew writings, Neron Caesar, and add the value of the letters we get 666.

This is as reasonable proof as we could expect that the beast that came up out of the sea was the Roman empire; and that the reigning monarch was Nero; and that Nero was the emperor when this book was written. This is one of the great land-marks of the book, furnished by the book itself to tell us when the book was written; and what is far more important, to tell us what the book was written about. If we give any heed at all to the reading of this section, chapters 12-19, we will see that it pertains to the times of the Roman empire, and not to some future period that has not yet dawned. This does not make it any less valuable to us; rather more so; for we have the light of God's past rule and providence to guide us where we need guidance, to warn us where we need warning, and to encourage us when we need encouragement.

CHAPTER 14.

1. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

The thirteenth chapter showed us the persecutions, by war and economic pressure, inflicted upon the early Christian church by the dragon, the beast, and the lamb-like beast; which were symbols of the Devil, the Roman Empire, and the Pagan religion.

Any church history will tell of the dreadful persecutions inflicted on the church during the first three centuries or until the church had won the empire to Christianity.

The thirteenth chapter gave us a glimpse of the persecution. Now the fourteenth chapter opens with a different scene.

Vs. 1-5. Here is seen the Lamb of God standing on Mt. Zion with 144,000 redeemed souls. There was a great anthem in heaven that rose in mighty crescendo like the roar of the sea and the roll of mighty thunder. There were voices of harpers harping with their harps, and singing a new song which none could learn except those redeemed ones around the throne. Then follows the traits of their character. They were "virgins," unpolluted by idolatry. "They follow the Lamb." They were "redeemed from among men," "the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb, etc."

That no one could learn their song was doubtless because it was the song of redemption; the angels might look with admiration and wonder on the work of redemption, but they have no experience of it. They can never sing: "for he hath redeemed us by his blood." The redeemed can sing a song that the angels cannot sing.

But why do we have this scene here at the beginning of the fourteenth chapter? We were in the midst of persecutions on earth and suddenly we are transported to heaven to hear the songs of the redeemed around God's throne. Why this break in the continuity of the story? Now it will be recalled that the same thing appears in the previous section of the book. While the seals were being opened that foretokened the judgments upon Jerusalem, there was a pause made between the sixth and seventh seals, and the curtains of heaven were drawn back and we were permitted to see, in the seventh chapter, the 144,000 redeemed and a great multitude that no man could number with white robes, and palms in their hands, singing their song of redemption, and ascribing salvation unto God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb. It is plain that here in the fourteenth chapter we have a duplicate of the scene in the seventh chapter; and evidently for the same reason. This is for the encouragement of the persecuted church on earth.

John was writing to Christians who were having their daily trials and temptations. The allurements of heathen immorality were before their eyes every day; the threat of bodily harm, and the pressure of economic privation were goading them to give up their virtue and their faith.

These scenes of heaven and the happiness of the redeemed were to show that God had better things to bestow than the world could afford. These scenes are for the moral effect, and the spiritual incentive to the tempted, persecuted, struggling church.

And this should have the same moral effect upon our hearts today, girding us to meet our temptations, and bear our trials, and to be faithful unto death, enduring as seeing him who is invisible.

6. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

If we have been disposed to think that there is nothing practical in Revelation, we have not penetrated its surface. What is the whole book about, but the trials of the Christian on earth, the doom of the wicked, and the glorious reward of those who are faithful unto death? Go and meet your fiery trials as did the faithful in John's day, and you will wear the crown, and wave the palm, and sing a song that the angels cannot sing.

Vs. 6-11. This passage gives us the messages of three angels. The first angel was seen flying and having (the) everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth. Is this the gospel of salvation to the world?, what we usually mean by the term "everlasting gospel?" It might seem so because of the very terms used, "everlasting gospel." Or is his gospel the announcement of the doom and judgment on the persecutor? This view is favored by the words which he actually speaks for he says: "The hour of his (God's) judgment is come," that is on the persecutor. That question perhaps we need not decide too stringently, for maybe one view really involves the other. At any rate, his message was: "Fear God and worship him that made all things, for he is the judge and the hour of his judgment is come." And the following angels will have something more to say about it. Then the second angel followed saying: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink

12. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." The last word is a Bible synonym for idolatry, perhaps including also all its vices.

Here we first meet the name Babylon. What was this Babylon, declared to be fallen? Now there is no doubt in my mind that this Babylon was Rome. For in the seventeenth chapter we are shown a woman gaudily dressed, called a harlot, with the name Babylon on her forehead, and the last verse of the chapter 17:18 says: "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." This is absolutely conclusive that Babylon is the name given to Rome in the Apocalypse and that here we are dealing with the times of Pagan Rome, and not with a future period denominated, "The Tribulation." Rome was called Babylon because sort of a duplicate of old Babylon, in that she was a persecutor of God's people, she was intensely idolatrous, and she was doomed to overthrow for her sins.

The third angel follows the other two declaring the wrath of God upon the worshipers of the beast. They shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.

Just as John showed in the beginning of the chapter the blessedness of those who worshiped the Lamb, so now he shows, with terrible imagery, the punishment of those that worship the beast. For the one eternal blessedness in heaven, for the other, eternal torment in hell.

V. 12. Observe the climax and the moral purpose of this verse, the best rendering of which is: "Here is the patience of the saints who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

This is the personal appeal or exhortation. It virtually says: Be patient in your trials; or, here is a reason why you should be patient; here is reason for heroic endurance even to martyrdom and death. Your sufferings will be short and your glory will be long; but as for the idolators and persecutors, their triumph will be short and their torment will be long. Here is the reason for patience.

13. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

14. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

20. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

V. 13. A voice said: "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." From henceforth,—yes, though you are thrown to the lions in the amphitheatre, though you are daubed with pitch and burned for a torch-light at a garden party, though your head rolls from the block at the stroke of the executioner's axe,—yes even thus you are blessed a thousand times above your persecutors.

These scenes and these exhortations evidently had special reference to the persecutions then being endured and further impending, but they come with the same force and applicability to every man in any age who lives his Christian life at the mouth of a fiery furnace.

Vs. 14-20. The last seven verses of this chapter present two scenes.

Scene first: One like the Son of Man sat on a white cloud with a sharp sickle in his hand. And an angel said: Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle, and the earth was reaped.

Scene second: An angel appears with a sharp sickle, and another angel cries: Thrust in thy sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle, gathered the vine of the earth, cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God, and the wine-press was trodden without the city and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of 1600 furlongs.

Some slight differences appear as between these two scenes. In one, the reaper was Christ; in the other, an angel. In one, the harvest seems to be of grain; in the other, the harvest of the vineyard. Then follows the pressing of grapes, and 200 miles of blood, horse-deep, flows from the wine-press. Is there any other difference? Does the first scene represent the gathering of the righteous and the second represent the gathering of the wicked? Or do both stand for the judgment of the wicked? Since we are dealing with the judgment of an evil power, the latter view may be best. At any rate the second scene is an appalling scene of wrath and judgment on the enemies of God. Two hundred miles of blood up to the bridles of the horses is certainly appalling enough, and perhaps further suggests that the judgment that would fall on this enemy of God and the church, would come in the form of war.

CHAPTER 15.

1. And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

3. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

4. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for **thou only art holy**: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

5. And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

6. And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

7. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

8. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

CHAPTER XV.

V. 1. "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God."

Just as there were seven seals and seven trumpets which were symbols of judgment upon Jerusalem; so now there are seven vials that are symbols of judgment upon Rome.

They are called the seven last plagues; they were the last as regards Rome; the last warning she would get before her downfall. God gives men space to repent, he bears long and warns often for he is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy; but the last time comes at length.

Vs. 2-8. Then follows another scene in heaven. The course of events pauses a little before those angels pour out their vials of wrath. And while the judgment holds back a little time, we are given to see the saints in heaven that have gotten the victory over the beast and over his image and his mark and the number of his name.

And they stand on a sea of glass and with the harps of God, they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. No doubt it is called the song of Moses in reference to the song that Moses sang on the banks of the Red Sea. That was a song in thanksgiving for deliverance; and this song of the saints is the same. It is called the song of the Lamb because they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the gracious strength afforded by a triumphant, risen, and ascended Redeemer. That little scene in heaven, before judgment falls, foretokens victory.

And the seven angels came out of the temple of God in heaven and were given the seven vials full of the wrath of God. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power, and no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

That the temple was filled with smoke indicated that God was in his temple. When Solomon dedicated the temple which he built, it was filled with a cloud to indicate God's presence and glory so that the priests could not minister by reason of the cloud.

Here it is said, no man was able to enter this temple in heaven till the seven plagues were fulfilled. This was no doubt to show that no intercession would now avail for the doomed sinners. Their day of grace was past. The judgment was now to fall without let or hindrance, just as we saw in the case of Jerusalem that an angel stood on the land and sea and lifted up his hand and swore that time should be no longer, or that no more delay should be granted. So here Rome has come to her judgment, and the vials of wrath, will be poured out, and nothing will avail to stay the judgment.

CHAPTER 16.

1. And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

2. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

3. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

4. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

5. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

6. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

7. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

8. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

CHAPTER XVI.

Chapter sixteen relates the pouring out of the vials. And they bear a close resemblance to the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets in the preceding section of the Book. As previously we saw plagues fall on the grass and trees, the sea, rivers, and fountains, and upon the sun, and moon, and stars; as there were clouds of locusts and armies of horsemen, and angels unloosed at the river Euphrates, so here the plagues fall on sea, and rivers, and fountains, on the sun, on the throne of the beast, on the river Euphrates, and lastly upon the air.

These were the judgments that fell on this great enemy of God, or, foretokened the judgment that was to fall.

We are told in the tenth verse that the fifth angel poured out his vial on the seat of the beast, which evidently meant the seat of government of this persecuting power, Imperial Rome.

Verse twelve tells us that the sixth angel poured out his vial on the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared.

9. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

11. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

13. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

We may remember in this connection that the doom of old Babylon was achieved by turning aside the waters of the Euphrates. As we use the word Waterloo as a symbol of defeat, they may have used the drying of the Euphrates as a symbol of defeat. "That the way of the kings of the East might be prepared." It is said that some of those nations in the far East first broke the prestige of Rome, and eventually the invading hordes from Asia and northern Europe completed her downfall and this suggests what is meant by the drying of the Euphrates, the coming of destructive armies.

V. 13. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet."

Observe carefully the terms of this verse and see what it proves. What did we have in chapters twelve and thirteen? Why, dragon, beast, and lamb-like beast, that is, the beast that had the two horns. What do we have here? The dragon? Yes. The beast? Yes. But what is the **last** beast called, the beast with the two horns that completes the trio? Here he is called the **false prophet**. Therefore John identifies that lamb-like beast with the false prophet; and thus we were right in identifying that two-horned beast with the false religion, or Pagan religion of Rome. It is by giving attention to these things that we get the meaning of the Apocalypse.

14. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

15. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

17. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

Verse fourteen tells us that these frogs that came out of the mouths of that trio are the spirits of devils, that they go to the kings of the earth to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

V. 15. Behold I come as a thief. God's judgments come unexpectedly. This seems to be a parenthesis, and then verse sixteen goes on to say: "And he, (or they, meaning the frog-like spirits) gathered them (meaning the kings or nations before mentioned) together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. Armageddon gets its name from Mt. Megiddo in Palestine. It is a place famous for battle and slaughter. It was where Deborah and Barak slaughtered the Canaanites, and where King Josiah fell in battle with the Egyptians. It would mean in those days what Waterloo means to us, and would be used in the same way. Its use here would indicate a place or scene of great slaughter. I take it that it is used here in that symbolical sense, but meant that Rome was coming to her Armageddon where she would go down in battle and slaughter.

The notion that Armageddon refers to some great cataclysm of the world's affairs in the future is hardly warranted. Any great disaster to a warring nation is an Armageddon. The Confederacy met its Armageddon at Gettysburg, and the Germans met their Armageddon at the Marne, and Rome was to meet her Armageddon.

Vs. 17,18. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, (the Devil is called the prince of the power of the air) and a great voice from heaven said: "It is done." Yes it is done, the last vial emptied, and the judgment executed. "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great."

18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

19. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

These are almost the exact words that we found in the eleventh chapter at the fall of Jerusalem, and as remarked then, they are descriptive of great judgments.

And this is borne out by the next verse as we see what follows.

V. 19. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, (the Sinaitic manuscript has city, in the singular as if referring to Rome alone, yet the plural is perfectly consistent with the view we maintain, for the empire had many cities) and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

Now it ought to be perfectly plain to what end all this intricate story has been leading, namely to the overthrow of Rome, here called Babylon, because she was the second great persecutor of the Christian church.

Plain as this is now, it will be still more evident when we pass in examination the two chapters of this section which are to follow. The last two verses of this chapter need no special comment; they are just vividly descriptive statements or rather symbols of the great judgment that has fallen. But the saddest note that is struck is that men blasphemed God because of their judgments, instead of repenting; which shows what incorrigible sinners they were.

We are thus brought, at the end of this chapter, to the judgment on Rome, here called Babylon; the enemy of God and the persecutor of his people. We have seen how Rome as the beast, and the agent of the dragon, the Devil, through the agency of the false prophet, persecuted the woman and her seed, which represented the church, and how God has brought her to judgment for it.

The next two chapters will bring out some more details and make increasingly clear the identity of the characters that have moved in these scenes. In the mean time we are to remember that the spiritual lessons are just as applicable to us today as they were to old Rome. If she could not sin with impunity neither can we. If her opposition to God met with terrible and awful retribution in the fire and brimstone whose smoke ascendeth forever and ever, we may be sure that all sin, unrepented and unforgiven, will meet with retribution, and that the wages of sin is death.

CHAPTER 17.

1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters;

2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

CHAPTER XVII.

We are fortunate in having chapter seventeen in the book of Revelation, for it serves to explain much of the symbolism of the book that otherwise would appear vague. And whatever explanations God gives of the meaning of this book are infinitely better than all the guesses men can make.

This book was given by God. He knows its meaning and what he says in explanation of it is final.

Vs. 1, 2. An angel comes to John and proposes to **show** him the **judgment** of the great whore that sitteth on many waters. In chapter sixteen we had the vials poured out and all the striking symbolism of the judgment that was to fall; and now the angel says he will **explain** it more fully. He calls the object of this judgment a whore that sitteth upon many waters. The whore is afterwards shown to be a city and the many waters are peoples and nations and tongues. It is here said that "the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." Her idolatry had permeated the world. The Old Testament had used the words adultery and fornication to describe idolatry. Some have thought that these words were used only when Israel, God's covenant people, were guilty of defection and fell into idolatry, and therefore they couldn't be applied to pagan Rome. But these words in the Old Testament are applied to other nations such as Babylon and Nineveh, and may here apply to pagan Rome for papal Rome has not come into vision.

V. 3. "So he carried me away into the wilderness;"—sometimes he was carried away into **heaven** to see visions; but the thing he was about to see now had no affinity with heaven, he could not see such a scene as this in heaven,

4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

so he was taken to a wilderness as a more appropriate place, and one more in congruity with what he was about to see. "And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." This is evidently the same beast that we saw in chapter thirteen, there it had seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy, and he spoke blasphemies against God. This is the same beast, he is scarlet now, perhaps in allusion to the blood he had shed; and this beast, as we have seen, was the empire of Rome.

And the woman that sat upon the beast as we shall see was the city of Rome.

V. 4. This woman was arrayed in gorgeous apparel, and decked with jewels, and held in her hand a cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. What a combination! a gaudy body and a filthy heart! and how natural it is; people try to cover up with dazzle the rottenness within. Paint on the outside and slime on the inside.

V. 5. "And on her forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." We have had the name Babylon. We were told: "Babylon is fallen." It is one of the problems of this book to determine what is meant by **Babylon**. Now this woman is labeled Babylon. That name is written on her; and if we find out what the woman is, we have found out what Babylon is. Now in the last verse of the chapter we are told: "And the woman is that great city that reigneth over the kings of the earth." And when you ask, what great city was it that, in John's day, ruled over the kings of the earth, you have only one answer, and that is, Rome. So it is that this seventeenth chapter serves as an interpreter of symbols.

6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

V. 6. "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Here is her persecution. She was intoxicated with a fanatical zeal to exterminate the Christians; Peter crucified head downwards, so tradition tells us; Paul yielding his head to the stroke of the executioner's ax; thousands on thousands executed in every form of torture. No wonder the word scarlet comes into the scene.

V. 7. The angel said: "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her." That is what we want to know. In the eighth verse we are told he shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition, that does not tell us much, but at least tells his character. Again, "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." That seems almost contradictory. Did it refer to the fact that one of his heads was wounded to death and yet the beast lived? Did it refer to the fact that one dynasty would be swept away, but another dynasty would still continue the life of the beast? Did it refer to the fact that the judgment on the beast was already pronounced, but not yet carried out? That although all the vials were poured out in the vision yet the time of the beast's destruction was yet in the future? That the beast was prospectively dead since God had pronounced his doom, but the actual stroke had not yet fallen?

That is difficult to determine with the few details at hand, but the following verses will be rather more explicit.

V. 9. "And here is the mind that hath wisdom" or here is the place to exercise your mind and gain wisdom. Here we will see great light on these problems. "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sit-

10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

eth," the well known seven hills of Rome. That is a geographical identification. I presume no one in John's day and we think no one in this day, could miss his meaning. The angel is telling John what that beast is that we have been talking about through all these chapters, and here he points out that the seven heads are seven hills. But there is another test of its identity, besides the geographical similiarity there is a historical one that describes the beast in time rather than in place. This we have in verse ten: "And there are seven kings; five are fallen, and one is, and the other is yet to come, and when he cometh he must continue a short space." We had the beast located geographically on the seven hills, which meant Rome. Now we have him located in history to tell us what period of Rome we are dealing with. And there is no period of Rome's history that will fit this description but the dynasty of the Caesars. Julius Caesar was the founder of the empire, he is the head that was wounded to death. But though that head was wounded to death, the empire continued to live. The beast did not die with one of its heads. The autocratic power of Rome was more absolutely exercised by succeeding kings, than Julius Caesar could ever have dreamed.

John says five of these kings are fallen, viz. Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, all these five had passed away when John wrote this book; and one is, viz. Nero, who was then on the throne; and one is yet to come, Galba, and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. Accordingly Galba succeeded Nero, and his short space was a reign of seven months.

This mention of the seven hills and the seven kings, this geographical and historical identification, fixes with absolute precision the time of this writing and the subject with which it deals. There should be no more doubt about this after such plain indications in the text itself, that the beast is the Roman Empire, and not some King that is yet to reign over the world in the supposed "Tribulation" as the premillennialists say.

11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

V. 11. "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."

Even when the dynasty falls and the seven heads are all gone, the beast lives on. "He is the eighth and is of the seven." When Caesar's dynasty fell, another dynasty succeeded and the beast still lived. That Empire did not perish with the Caesars. Nero went down, Galba went down, but Vespasian, and Titus and Domitian and others continued the empire which still persecuted the Christian Church.

Vs. 12-14. These verses tell us about the horns of the beast. He had not only seven heads; but ten horns. These ten horns were ten kings, not kings sitting on the throne of Rome, as I understand, but those kings and countries subjected by Rome, and which made the empire great. We know that Rome embraced at that time the countries of Europe that bordered on the Mediterranean Sea, and the northern part of Africa and considerable territory in Asia, and also in central Europe. Rome had conquered the world.

It is further said of these horns or subsidiary nations, "They give their power and strength unto the beast." Yes this they did for a while, but wait and see. By and by these horns turn against her. But in the meantime, these horns shall make war with the Lamb; they joined in persecuting the church, and strengthened the government against Christianity. "But the Lamb shall overcome them." All the powers of the empire were joined to crush the Christian church, but the church came off victorious. The leaven was in the lump and eventually leavened the whole lump.

16. And the ten horns, which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

V. 16. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore and shall make her desolate, and naked and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." There are two things to be observed here. First that the ten horns are not successive kings on the throne of Rome, but they are contemporary powers under Rome. They combine against her. The next verse speaks of their agreeing together, hence they are contemporaneous.

Second, that these kingdoms embraced within Rome are the agents of her downfall. And the student of history will recall how the Germans, the Goths, and others descended on Rome like the scourge of God. So that the horns that at first gave the beast their power at length turned their power against him. The nations embraced within the empire that at first made it great, turned at length against Rome and wrought her destruction.

And the last verse of the chapter says: "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which **reigneth** over the kings of the earth." She was reigning **then**, and there is only one city that can fill the bill. This shows conclusively that we are not dealing here with the Papacy, as some interpreters think, for the Papacy had not yet risen when John wrote; and did not reach any point of reigning over kings for many centuries after this time.

And this shows just as conclusively that these chapters of Revelation cannot be forced into the Premillennial scheme that assigns all this middle part of the book to a "Tribulation" period just prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

And this should be particularly observed that all this historical setting; all this plain identification of symbols which God has furnished us in the text of the book itself, cuts to the roots the whole Premillennial interpretation of Revelation. If the woman was the city of Rome, and John says she was, then the beast that carried her was certainly the Roman Empire, and not some future king of a "Tribulation" period.

17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Another thing to be observed is that the figure of the beast with seven heads and ten horns is imagery borrowed from Daniel who used a ten horned beast, the same figure, to describe a world power.

We must not, however, too hastily conclude that Daniel and John refer to the same political world power.

It must not be assumed that the Bible has only one meaning for a symbol. Leaven generally represents sin, but in the parable of the leaven, it represents the kingdom of God. Again a lion is the symbol used in Scripture to represent such diverse personages as Jesus Christ and the devil.

Because a fig tree may be used in one place to teach a lesson to the Jews, it does not follow that every time a fig tree is mentioned in the Bible it must be regarded as a type of the Jews.

CHAPTER 18.

1. And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

3. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

4. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

5. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This chapter does little more than sum up what has already been said.

Vs. 1-2. A mighty angel comes down from heaven so bright and effulgent that the earth was lit up with his glory. "And he cried mightily with a strong voice saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." This is just another declaration, after all that have already been made, of the fall and punishment of the great and wicked and persecuting Rome.

Vs. 4,5. Another voice from heaven bids the people of God to come out of her, for her sins have reached unto heaven.

God's people must ever be a separate people, not conformed to the world, but transformed. The mark that you carry in your foreheads must be the mark of a godly heart and a holy life. Paul says: "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." And up and down God's word it is written: "Be ye holy for I am holy." After some recital of the wickedness of this great city, it is said in verse eight, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for

6. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.

7. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

8. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

9. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.

10. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

11. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

strong is the Lord that judgeth her." The Revised Version puts that in the past tense: "which judged her;" the sentence is already declared, and now will be executed, or so far as the vision is concerned is executed. But some one may say: Rome did not fall so suddenly nor so utterly and therefore this hardly fits her case. Rome still exists as a city to the present day. But that objection has little force. Rome did fall. When Gibbon sat down one hundred and fifty years ago to write the history of Rome, what title did he give his work? Why, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." But it was not sudden, you say. Let me refer you to old Babylon. When the armies of Cyrus captured her on the night of Belshazzar's feast, the first blow was sudden, but centuries dragged away before her ruin was total. So with Tyre, so with almost every other city that has been destroyed.

Now Rome was frequently sacked and burned, captured again and again, and in her fall there was the suddenness of calamity, and the gradualness of decline. That a city called Rome exists in the present day, does not nullify this interpretation. The old persecuting Rome fell. The enemy of God and the church received her judgment. Rome as a persecuting power went down, as a judgment for her sins, for it was said, v. 24, "In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints and of all that were slain upon the earth."

12. The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

13. And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

14. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

15. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

16. And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

17. For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18. And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

19. And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

20. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

There is still a city called Rome near the site of the old one. But the old Roman empire that was the beast, and the harlot city borne by the beast, met their doom at the hands of God.

The purpose of this prophecy clearly embraced the Rome of John's day, and found its fulfillment in the destruction of the great persecuting power. All this seems perfectly evident. The beast with the seven heads and ten horns was Rome with her seven kings of the Caesar dynasty, and her ten subsidiary nations embraced within her great domain.

The harlot woman that rode upon the beast is so clearly defined by the angel that spoke to John that no one can miss the meaning, for "The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." **Reigneth**, was reigning then when the Revelation was given.

21. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

22. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft **he be**, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23. And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

24. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

We have followed in the interpretation of these chapters, what God himself has disclosed, as the meaning of the figures and symbols. And it must ever remain true that the best interpretation of a book is the interpretation which the book itself puts upon itself in a fair and natural construction of the text. We must give attention to what the book says; not to what some fanciful imagination makes it say.

And if we take the book at its face value and its plain meaning we will not lack the moral and spiritual lessons that make it a means of grace.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” And he who reads this book of Revelation with due attention to its spiritual application, will find it “Profitable for instruction in righteousness,” and a means of grace in his daily living, for in this book no quarter is given to sin; and holiness and obedience to God are required of his people, even if they are thrown to lions in the amphitheatre, or burned for torch-lights in one of Nero’s garden-parties.

CHAPTER 19.

1. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

2. For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter stands in the closest connection with the chapters preceding. We have seen the vials of judgment poured out upon the beast and the seat of the beast.

We have heard the declaration that Babylon is fallen. We have been shown the judgment of the great whore that rode on the scarlet-colored beast, otherwise described as "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

Now in the opening of the nineteenth chapter we have the rejoicing of heaven over the judgment of the harlot city. A great voice of much people in heaven says: "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honor and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

This is sufficient to show that we are still dealing with the series of events that occupied the book from the thirteenth chapter onwards. Let it be kept clearly in mind that the theme has not changed thus far, that the events of the story are well knit or close woven.

Verses four to six reiterate the praise of heaven. All the elders, and living ones (four beasts) and the mighty multitudes of heaven, shout with one voice, like the roar of the ocean and the roll of thunder, saying: "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

7. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Yes, the Lord reigneth, let it be uttered with the voice of many waters, and the roll of mighty thunders till all the earth hears and understands. The devil may rage, and the beast may fight, and the false prophet may join hands with both, and the harlot may entice and seduce, but all of them together are no match for the Lord, they only show their impotence in conflict with the Almighty.

Wickedness may rear its head to the skies; persecution may exploit her blandishments; deteriorating and disintegrating forces may be at work; but the Lord still lives, and he is still on the throne of the universe, and the church of God will come off victor in the conflict with the world because the omnipotent God lives in her and one like the Son of Man walks amid the seven golden candlesticks.

In the previous chapters we have seen the dragon, and the beast, and the false prophet persecuting the church, but in this chapter we see them completely overthrown, and the divine captain of our salvation leading his followers to victory. It is easy to catch the practical encouragement found in these visions, both as it affected the churches addressed and as it sings down the centuries to every well-fought battlefield of the church's activities.

In verses seven to nine we have something said about the marriage of the Lamb. But there is no marriage scene shown us either by vision or description. The things particularly stressed in this passage are the apparel of the bride, and the blessedness of those called.

The bride of Christ in Scripture phraseology, is the church. Her apparel is her righteousness. "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

10. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

It is the purpose of God and the care of the church to produce a holy people, fitted by grace to be the bride of the Lamb. This moral purity, this fine linen of righteousness is the thing that bulks in the revelator's eye, and not a nuptial scene. The church must make herself ready; but the readiness consists in her moral purity. Her readiness does not consist in a curiosity as to when Christ shall come, but in the righteousness which is of God by faith, and all its spiritual results.

Verse eleven opens a new scene, but not an entirely new subject. John sees in heaven the vision of a white horse, the rider was called Faithful and True, his eyes a flame of fire, on his head many crowns, his vesture dipped in blood and his name is called "The Word of God." Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword and on his vesture and on his thigh a name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And the armies in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean.

There can be no doubt who the rider is on this white horse. There is only one who can be called KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

He is going forth at the head of an army and this implies a battle and a warfare. This is the other side of the picture which hitherto has not been put in concrete form. Now we are getting in vision and symbol the other side of the conflict. There are always two sides in a war. We saw the dragon going forth to make war upon the woman (the church) and her seed 12:17. We saw the beast and

15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16. And he hath on **his** vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**

17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

the false prophet bring all the powers at their disposal to crush the church of God. But that was only on one side of the lines. The battle was not so one-sided as that. Here is a better leader with **his** army. The foe will be met with a better army and a better weapon than his own, and we will see presently what the outcome of the conflict will be.

Observe that this rider on the white horse had no sword in his hand, but he had a sword in his mouth. He had no sword that could cut off people's heads, but the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God."

Observe too that the armies that followed him had no swords or weapons of any kind; but they had something much better and more effective. They were clothed in fine linen, white and clean, which, we were just told, is the righteousness of saints, and righteousness is more effective in the battle of the Lord than all the swords in the world. Here then is the army and here are their weapons, and the battle is about to be joined. We can observe unmistakably what sort of battle it is, the battle between good and evil, between Christ and Satan; between the gospel and its enemies; between the church and her opposers.

The narrator pauses a moment before the battle begins. He shows us an angel in the sun who calls with a loud voice to the fowls that fly in the heavens, and bids them gather for a feast on the flesh of the fallen enemy. This looks to me like irony or an expression of strong contempt for the enemy, that all the vultures and buzzards and birds of prey that feed on carrion should be invited to the feast before the battle was even begun. At least it expresses absolute confidence on which side the victory would lie.

18. That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all **men**, both free and bond, both small and great.

19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

And now for the clash of the armies, verses 19, 20. "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army."

The twentieth verse adds the false prophet also as one engaged in that battle. Now it is of the utmost importance to observe clearly who is fighting this battle with the rider on the white horse. We are plainly told that it is the **beast**, the beast of chapter 13:1, the beast having the seven heads and ten horns, and the heads identified as seven hills and also seven rulers in the Caesarian dynasty, and the ten horns as ten subsidiary kingdoms,—the beast that carried that harlot woman who was said to be a "city that reigneth over the kings of the earth." There should now be no difficulty in knowing who was leading this army against the rider on the white horse. It was that same old beast. Now that beast has been always associated with another one; we saw him first in Chapter 13:11; he had some appearance of a lamb, but spoke as a dragon. He was hand-in-glove with the beast. He gave power to the beast, and led the world to worship the beast. He was afterward called the false prophet (16:13) and so he is called here.

Now, who is making war? That same old **beast**, that same **false prophet**, and the kings subsidiary to them. But what is the result? "And the beast was taken, and the (with-him) false prophet. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth."

The writer is very careful to keep us in mind that that sword proceeded **out of his mouth**.

Now I submit the question: Is this not the conquering power of the gospel and the triumph of Christianity? The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, by preaching, and teaching, and testimony conquers the world for Christ. And for this very reason I think the writer was so particular to point out that the sword was in the rider's mouth. The world is to be conquered by the gospel. Christ said: "Go ye and make disciples of every creature baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

It is the triumph of the gospel that we have in this nineteenth chapter. It only remains now to look at some contrary renderings of these scenes. We have already removed the Papacy from consideration in this book, not that we desire to whitewash the Papacy, but because the chronology, and the setting of the scenes do not fit the case.

But the interpretation that we are confronted with today is the premillennial, and it particularly concerns this nineteenth chapter.

According to the premillennialist, the seven churches of Asia spoken of in the second and third chapters, are seven periods of history from John's time, down till the time of Christ's return. The fourth chapter begins the Tribulation period at the beginning of which the righteous dead are raised and together with the pious living are caught up into the air to be with Christ while the Tribulation is on the earth.

There is not one syllable in the book that conveys such information, and we are not justified in making types out of plain, historical and didactic statements at the pleasure of the interpreter. The Scriptures do indeed contain many types. They are legitimate in their place; but the habitual type-maker is the despair of interpretive science.

Now according to the premillennialist all the chapters four to eighteen inclusive describe the Tribulation. No matter that Jerusalem, and the temple, and the altar are there, still unfallen; no matter that Rome is there on her seven hills, with her seven kings; no matter that the angel

said: "And the harlot is that great city that reigneth (or is then reigning) over the kings of the earth." The premillennialist just disposes of all that with his usual facility. He just whips it all off into the future as something that has not yet come to pass, notwithstanding the plain indications of the book.

Now when the premillennialist comes to this nineteenth chapter he concludes that the Tribulation period, said by some to be seven years, is over. And that Christ and the church who have been in the air during these seven years, now descend to the earth, and that is what is meant by the rider on the white horse and the armies that follow him. So that the world is conquered not by the gospel, but by the second coming of Jesus Christ. And the beast is the Tribulation king, or Anti-Christ, which is to rule the world in some future age and which Christ will destroy when he comes. What are the objections to this view of the nineteenth chapter?

1st. The coming of this rider on the white horse is accompanied with a good deal of description and detail. It indicates a process rather than an event. When Christ comes it is said to be sudden, in the twinkling of an eye, like the flash of lightning from one end of heaven to another. When you read through the chapter you will see no suddenness to any of these events, but rather deliberate progress. It is unlike the Second coming in this respect.

2nd. The writer insistently holds it before us that the sword is in the rider's mouth. This sword is the weapon of conquest. Paul in describing the Christian armor says: "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." All this picture and all its related phraseology teaches us that the weapon that conquers the world is the word of God, or the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not to look for the world to be converted by some spectacular cataclysm, but by the preaching and teaching, and testimony of the church that is clothed in the fine linen of righteousness. That is the way the Roman Empire was conquered for Christ as a matter of history and that is the way it will be till the end of time.

3rd. The absolutely conclusive fact comes out in the end that John shows, yea says in so many words, that this conflict of the rider was with the **beast and false prophet**

—that **same old beast** that we have been dealing with through all these chapters, the beast of the seven hills, and the seven kings, the beast that bore the harlot woman which was “that city,” and the false prophet associated with him, viz. pagan Rome. No one unbiased by a theory could drag this out of the historical past and put it into a hypothetical future to which not one of these historical references bear any allusion. The book clearly fixes who these personages are, fixes their place in geography and history, and we would have to disrupt the whole story to admit the premillennial interpretation.

4th. The revealer repeatedly declared to John that he was to see visions of things that “must shortly be done.” We submit that it is straining the meaning of words too much to make shortly mean several thousands of years.

For these reasons we conclude that the premillennial interpretation is utterly out of the question.

But does the conquest of this rider on the white horse pertain only to the Roman Empire? Must we be ever dealing with things that are dead and buried centuries ago? Is there nothing in all this that touches and vitalizes the church of the present day? or are we never to get beyond the dry dust of the catacombs?

Far from such mournful pessimism, we find the greatest encouragement. The rider on that white horse is marching still. He has gone far beyond the confines of the Roman Empire. He did not go forth to lead his armies to one brief battle, but to every battle where the conflict is fought. He led his armies through the conflict with slavery and won the day. He has led his missionary contingent to all lands in the world and is still riding at the front. He is leading his church in the fight with the rum power, and scoring victories every day.

Let the church remember that this rider on the white horse is the living Jesus, that he is in the forefront of every battle, that just as he conquered the beast and the false prophet, so he will conquer every enemy. The beast and the prophet were just one episode on the way, and the triumph of the church is just as sure as the promise of him who said: “Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

The rider on the white horse is still riding on. Let the church follow, clothed in linen, white and clean.

CHAPTER 20.

1. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

CHAPTER XX.

This chapter may be regarded as the beginning of a new section. Not that it has no relation to the past, for each section leads up to the next, and the latter grow out of the former. But this chapter leads us into scenes that are futuristic, here we have vistas that reach forward to the final judgment of the whole world.

We saw Christ and his armies conquer the beast and the false prophet and they were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. But Satan is still at large, and this chapter shows that the battle is carried against Satan himself. The conquering Christ that led his church to triumph over the persecuting powers of earth leads on till he binds the power of Satan and frees the world at least for a time of his deceptive and seductive influence.

Vs. 1-3. John saw an angel come down from heaven with the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on Satan and bound him for a thousand years and cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up. Nothing is said as to the time intervening between the events of the 19th and 20th chapters. How long it is from the capture of the beast and false prophet to the binding of Satan we have no means of knowing, but it does not look as if Satan is bound yet.

We get the word 'millennium' from this word 'thousand' in its Latin form. The word 'millennium' is often on our lips; and popularly it means a period of righteousness and blessedness on earth when Satan's power shall be withdrawn.

Not much is said here about a millennium. It is passed over with but scanty mention. We are rather surprised with the paucity of details. Some have even thought that, from such meager mention, there may be no such thing as a millennium. But it is more than likely that the faith and expectation of the church is right. There are some other passages chiefly in the Old Testament that predict a glorious outcome to God's kingdom on earth, although it is not called a millennium nor any limits of time assigned. Moreover, nearly all John's imagery is based on Old Testament prophecy, and it may well be so in regard to the millennium. Isaiah, in his second chapter, describes the blessing that shall come to the world from Judea and Jerusalem. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more." "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver and gold to the moles and the bats."

And Micah in his fourth chapter says substantially the same thing in about the same words, beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Isaiah, in his eleventh chapter, describes a world of peace that grows out of that "stem of Jesse." "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid—they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," and now if you please observe the reason, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." This expresses the means, as well as the reason of universal peace.

We therefore conclude that there will be a millennium and that it will result from the preaching and teaching of the gospel, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord" and as it is further said: "and he shall smite the earth with the **rod of his mouth**, and with the **breath of his lips** shall he slay the wicked."

John says little about conditions on the earth during this millennium, he rather leaves that to be inferred from the fact that Satan is bound, and from the rejoicing of the saints. It is said that Satan is bound and shut up, "that he should deceive the nations no more." When Satan's deceptions are withdrawn the consequent effect upon the world may be inferred. Again the judgment given to the saints, their reigning and rejoicing, though it be a scene

4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

in heaven, reflects conditions on the earth. The heavenly picture is indicative of the earthly situation. But here it is well to remember that there is inherent evil in human hearts and there may be some tares among the wheat even in the millennium. Whether the thousand years are to be taken literally and strictly or as expressing an indefinitely long period, need not concern us much. We may remark, however, that since evil has prevailed long in the world, it is quite appropriate that righteousness should be dominant much longer, since this is God's world and the principle of his kingdom is expressed in the words: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Vs. 4,5. "And I saw thrones." This is a new vision, indicated by the words, 'and I saw,' which expression indicates the transition from one scene to another.

"Thrones," where were they? In every other place in this book of Revelation where John mentions a throne or thrones, they are in heaven and this is apparently no exception to the rule.

"And they sat on them," who is meant by 'they'? Evidently the martyrs and saints who are mentioned below.

"And judgment was given unto them." In what sense was judgment given to these martyrs and saints? Some have thought that they were made associate judges with Christ to rule and pass judgment on the world and men.

This view cannot be accepted. Judgment transcends the functions of finite creatures; even glorified saints. Judgment is the prerogative of Deity only. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." If Christ were not God, even he could not judge.

6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

But the meaning of this "judgment" requires us to go back to chapter 6:9-11. There we heard the prayers of these martyrs and saints: "How long, O Lord dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

This verse tells that their prayers were answered. Their persecutors were judged and were hurled from their seats of power into oblivion, even Satan was cast into the bottomless pit, their blood was avenged; the cause for which they gave their lives was vindicated. That is how **judgment** was given them, **their foes were judged, and they were avenged and exalted.**

Here we see that we must know the book as a whole in order to interpret a single passage. Sound principles of interpretation regard the unity and consistency of the whole story.

"And I saw the **souls** of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, etc; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." And at the end of the fifth verse it is added: "This is the first resurrection."

Did we ever meet with these souls before? I think they are quite familiar to the student of Revelation. Go back to Chapter 6:9-11 and you will recognize them as quite familiar characters. There John saw the souls of saints and martyrs under the altar in heaven. There they are called 'souls.' Here they are called 'souls.' There they were "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Here they are "beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God." There they cry "How long till we are judged and avenged?" Here we have seen that they are "judged and avenged." There they were told "that they should rest yet for a little season, till their fellow-servants and brethren who were about to be killed, even as they, should be completed." Here we see the tale of persecution completed and the persecutors consigned to their judgment.

It is quite clear then that we are here dealing with that same company of martyrs and saints that John saw in the vision of the sixth chapter augmented by those "fellow-servants" which were to fall, and which have now fallen victims of Satan's rage and the persecutor's power.

Where were those martyrs and saints whom John saw? Under the altar, in heaven, where white robes were given them. And this chapter too evidently regards them as in heaven.

The fifth verse of this chapter says: "This is the first resurrection." What is the antecedent of "this"? Evidently this exaltation of saints and martyrs, sitting on thrones in heaven, rejoicing and reigning with Christ.

In chapter 6:9 John said: "I saw souls" under the altar, no bodies. Here again he says: "I saw souls," no bodies. The term 'resurrection' is applied to the souls of these saints and martyrs and not to their bodies. It therefore designates a spiritual exaltation and not a bodily resurrection. That is, the word 'resurrection' is here used in a figurative sense to denote their spiritual exaltation. Is such usage justifiable? Is resurrection ever used in any sense, but that of a bodily resurrection? The figurative usage of 'resurrection' is a very familiar one in the Scriptures. In Ezek. 37:12, God says: "I will open your graves and cause you to come out of your graves and bring you into the land of Israel." What is meant? Resurrection of bodies? No, restoration of the captive nation to their land, under the figure of resurrection. Hosea says the same thing in almost the same language,—used resurrection as a figure of restoration.

John in his gospel, chapter five, speaks of regeneration as the dead hearing the voice of the Son of God, and coming to life. Then in a few verses after he speaks of a bodily resurrection, thus putting the two ideas in close conjunction, spiritual resurrection and bodily resurrection.

If John in his gospel speaks of a spiritual resurrection first and a bodily resurrection second, is it strange if here in Revelation he should have a first resurrection which is spiritual and in the end of this chapter a second resurrection which is bodily?

Paul also falls in line with John in putting regeneration or spiritual life in the light of a resurrection. Ephes. 2:5,6 "Even when we were dead in sins hath given us life together with Christ, and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Ephes. 5:14 "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light."

Col. 3:1 "If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above."

All these passages show that the Scriptures put spiritual life and blessings under the figure of a resurrection, and it may well be so here.

We are further told: Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection on these the second death hath no power. What is it that delivers from the second death, or the lake of fire? Is it bodily resurrection or is it regeneration? And every sensible man must answer: It is regeneration. Therefore, blessed and holy is he that hath part in the resurrection of regeneration, for on such the second death hath no power; regeneration and exaltation being inseparable parts of one whole. We therefore conclude that resurrection is here used in a figurative sense, to indicate a spiritual resurrection, a common usage of the Scriptures. Nothing is said of bodies much less of bodies coming out of their graves. John saw 'souls,' and evidently the same souls that he saw under the altar in heaven in the visions of the sixth chapter. John saw the blessedness of those saints and martyrs in heaven and that is what he calls the first resurrection.

In verse five we find the expression, "But the rest of the dead lived not (again) until the thousand years were finished." This expression is not found in some manuscripts notably the Vatican and Syriac. But assuming that it is a genuine part of our text it will come up for some reference as we proceed. These six verses have been the subject of much debate in the controversies over this book. We will notice a few variant views.

1st. The premillennial view assumes that the nineteenth chapter describes the second coming of Christ and that these six verses teach that all the righteous dead will be resurrected and live on the earth during the thousand years, and the wicked dead will not be resurrected till the

thousand years are ended. Then at the end of the post-millennial period they will be resurrected and brought to judgment as described in the end of this chapter which is a judgment of the wicked only according to the premillennialist. The difficulties in this view are these:

(a) It contradicts everything taught elsewhere in the Bible about the resurrection and the judgment. It contradicts Christ's repeated declarations that the resurrection is at the last day, and the judgment of the righteous at the last day. It contradicts Christ's teaching in John 5:28 that the just and unjust are raised at the same time, one resurrection for all that are in their graves.

It contradicts the teaching of Christ in Matt. 25:31 that when Christ comes then will ensue the general judgment and the assignment of destiny to the righteous and wicked.

It contradicts the closing part of this twentieth chapter where we see all the dead, small and great, coming from their graves and from the bottom of the sea and standing before God in one general judgment.

(b) It makes this obscure passage a key to interpret the plain portions elsewhere, whereas the true rule is that the obscure must be interpreted by the obvious.

(c) This view is supposed to be strengthened by the statement: "The rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." But even the premillennialist would not be ready to admit that the wicked dead were actually resurrected at the end of the thousand years, and actually "lived" during the post-millennial period, which his literal interpretation would seem to require.

(d) Besides, the premillennial view makes the resurrection precede the "Tribulation," and therefore should show us the resurrection at the beginning of the fourth chapter (and not a line of it is there) instead of at the beginning of the twentieth chapter.

If this is a living of resurrected saints on earth, what becomes of them at the end of the thousand years? Do they die again? or ascend again? To this, premillennialism has no answer.

Besides if the end of the chapter describes only the resurrection and judgment of the wicked, what provision is made for the resurrection of all the righteous who were born and lived in the millennial and post-millennial periods? And for this also premillennialism has no answer.

These difficulties seem fatal to the premillennial view.

2nd. Another view held by Saint Augustine, by Dr. David Brown, a great authority on the subject, and by Dr. A. H. Strong, the great theologian of the Baptist church, is to the effect that the reigning saints are the triumphant church on earth in the millennial period.

The Christian cause or body that was smitten with the sword and burned in the persecutor's fire, will rise to triumph and domination in the millennial days. That is the resurrection, it is the resurrection of the **cause**, or **party** or **church** of Christ. It will rise to power and rule the world while the Satan party or serpent party will be overcome. But when the thousand years are finished that Satan-party will rise again to live and fight and persecute the church in the post-millennial period as this chapter depicts.

This view brings out the antithesis expressed in these verses. The saint-party rose and lived, the serpent-party also rose and lived. No bodily resurrection in either case; that occurs at the end when the dead small and great stand before God.

3rd. The view honored by the names of Prof. C. A. Briggs and Prof. B. B. Warfield is that this vision shows the saints and martyrs in heaven. It was meant to show that the redeemed are in heaven safe from all the persecutions that raged below, and that John wrote this to encourage the church facing the persecution of that and subsequent times. It would nerve them to faithfulness to see the glory of the martyr when the persecutor's sword had done its worst. It was not meant to show the raising of bodies, but the raising of souls to their heavenly home. This is the first resurrection, the entrance upon heavenly joys, and the second resurrection is the bodily resurrection of all the dead at the end of the world.

7. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

It should not pass without notice that the heavenly scene reflects the earthly. The reason why the saints rejoiced in heaven was because the church on earth was triumphant. They were judged and avenged by the destruction of the persecutors and the binding of Satan, but that meant that the church on earth was regnant. If the millennium means anything it means the triumph of Christ's cause on earth. Thus Christ's cause and people were dominant during the thousand years, and Satan's allies were subdued till the thousand years were ended, and after that they rose to power again. This may express the antithesis between the saints that lived and reigned and the rest that lived not till the thousand years were finished, and then they did live and rose to their old time power and persecution.

Vs. 7:10. These verses give us the post-millennial period. Satan is loosed; and goes out to deceive the nations; Gog and Magog are mentioned; these nations are gathered to battle against the people of God, and God destroys them with fire from heaven. Then the devil that deceived them is cast into the lake of fire where that beast and false prophet were put, as we saw at the end of the nineteenth chapter. This lake of fire is the final abode of the devil and his followers, and is afterward described as the second death. This passage has some resemblance to Ezekiel 38 and 39 where Gog and Magog are mentioned as northern nations that come up against Israel. John usually borrows his imagery from the Old Testament, and this is the imagery of the past applied to a future event.

11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Vs. 11-15. And now the chapter closes with the scene of the final and general judgment. "And I saw a great white throne and him that sat upon it from whose face the earth and heaven fled away." Then follows a description of the judgment.

Here is the place to put the second coming of Jesus Christ; when he sits on his throne and summons the whole human race to judgment. This is just the way, and the place in time, in which Christ himself described his coming. In Matt. 25:31 Christ says: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory and before him shall be gathered all nations and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats"—**his coming at the judgment.** "The earth and heaven fled away;" so Peter writes that on that day that cometh as a thief, "the heavens shall depart as a scroll."

Some one may say that this is not much description of the second coming. Well the Bible nowhere gives us much description of it; it may not lend itself to much description, for it is "in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump." But sufficient description is given to connect it with the final judgment.

Here then we have the great judgment throne, and the dead small and great stand before God. The sea gives up the dead which were in it and death and hades give up the dead in them, and they are judged, every man according to their works.

These terms are surely universal enough to include the whole human race,—the dead small and great, the dead without distinction, the dead in the sea, and the dead in death and hades. Here is a general resurrection and a general judgment, if language means anything.

But the premillennialist tells us that this is the resurrection and judgment of the wicked only. He is driven to that because he has already resurrected the righteous at the beginning of the millennium, and so denies that they are represented here.

But besides the universal terms already mentioned, observe that the **'book of life'** is here. The book of life is the list of the redeemed. Verse fifteen tells us: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." All the world falls into two classes; those who are written in the book of life and those who are not. Here then is evidence of the righteous as well as of the wicked. The destiny of the wicked is shown; they are cast into the lake of fire and we are told, "This is the second death." Into that lake of fire we saw that the beast and false prophet were cast, then we saw Satan consigned to the same place, and here his followers meet the same fate. If it is objected that here we have no mention of the destiny of the righteous and therefore they could not have been in this scene, we reply that the book of Revelation does not end here and that the story is to be continued and we shall see the destiny of the righteous in the portion that is yet to come.

CHAPTER 21.

1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

CHAPTER XXI.

At the beginning of chapter 21, we arrive at the watershed that divides time and eternity. In chapter 20 we had the millennium, the post-millennial period, the general resurrection and judgment and the final destiny of the wicked. This twenty-first chapter follows as a continuation of the story. Having consigned the wicked to the lake of fire, described in a few brief words, the writer proceeds in this long passage to disclose the glorious abode and the beatific destiny of those whose names were written in the book of life. Our story therefore leads us beyond the confines of this world or this age of earthly affairs to view things in vastly different conditions from anything we know here. The heart of the church has ever beat in response to this revelation of its heavenly home; and without doubt the heart of the church is right. Moreover if there is any chronological relation between the different parts of this book, and there evidently is, then the progress of events brings us to scenes that lie beyond the resurrection and final judgment. Besides the chronological progress, the conditions are not earthly,—no sin, no sorrow, no pain, no death, no sea, no sun and moon. Where can such unearthly features find a place?

The first verse of the chapter gives us the key to what follows: "And I saw a new heaven (sidereal heavens) and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

This reference to the passing of the old earth and heavens is sufficient to show that we are dealing with things beyond the resurrection and final judgment.

We find in II Peter, chapter 3, a similar reference. The day of the Lord will come as a thief, the heavens shall pass away, the earth shall be burned up; nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Peter is quite probably referring to this twenty-first chapter of Revela-

2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

tion; however, they agree as to the facts, in placing the new heavens and earth after the first have "passed away," or been "burned up." Here is the evident antithesis between what we call "this world" and the "next world."

That there should be "no more sea," fitly expresses a condition of the heavenly life. The sea to the ancients was not so much expressive of majesty and grandeur, as something dangerous, destructive, restless. Isaiah says: "The wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." But that heavenly life will be calm and peaceful, no storms to break, no uncanny dangers to lurk and threaten.

What cosmical changes are involved in the conception here presented, what siderial and systemic reconstruction, is a subject not involved in the interpretation of this book and on which it is wise not to speculate.

Vs. 2-5. John sees another vision of the holy city New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. There follows a description of conditions in that holy city. God shall dwell with his people, and wipe away all tears from their eyes; no death, no sorrow, no crying, no pain, for the former things have passed away. Here is a scene of supreme beauty and supreme blessedness.

6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

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

13. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

V. 6. "And he (God) said unto me, it is done." This expression "it is done" has been used elsewhere in Revelation, where something has been brought to culmination. The meaning is that God has wrought out his purpose in saving his people, and here is the consummation; here is the climax of the long process of redemption. He has brought them home, he dwells among them, they are his people and he is their God. "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."—fitting consummation of the story of redemption.

V. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit," not all things as the authorized version has it, but "these things," showing that this is the home and the blessedness of the overcomers, while the next verse puts in contrast the place and fate of those who have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second death.

Verse nine to the end of the chapter inclusive is occupied with a new vision of this holy city New Jerusalem. An angel said: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he showed him this holy city the New Jerusalem.

14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

16. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

17. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

18. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

In the nineteenth chapter of Revelation we had mention of the bride of the Lamb, but no vision of a marriage ceremony. In the second verse of this chapter this holy city is seen coming down from God as a bride adorned for her husband and here in the ninth verse she is called the bride, the Lamb's wife. The union of the bride and her heavenly bridegroom is therefore implied in these scenes that lie beyond the resurrection and final judgment. In chapter nineteen the bride was clothed in fine linen which is the righteousness of saints; the dwellers in that city, the body of the redeemed, therefore, rather than the city itself, constitutes the bride or wife of the Lamb.

Paul speaks of Christ and the church on this wise: "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." The glorified church is the bride of Christ, and the place of their union and fellowship is that holy city the New Jerusalem that descends from God out of heaven.

Now follows a long description of this city with its walls, and gates, and foundations, and streets of gold.

It has twelve gates in its walls bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; three gates toward each point of the compass, perhaps signifying its accessibility to all the world. The sons of the north, and the sons of the south, the children of the east, and the children of the west may find their way to this city that is open toward all quarters. Behold the universality of God's love, and the universal call of God's grace.

19. And the foundations of the wall of the city **were** garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation **was** jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20. The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chryso-prasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

21. And the twelve gates **were** twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city **was** pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

22. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

24. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

The wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. We call to mind the saying, that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles; Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

“The city lieth foursquare;” “the length and breadth and height are equal;” perfect symmetry, perfect proportion. The city when measured is twelve thousand furlongs each way, or fifteen hundred miles long, broad, and high; sufficient to indicate the symbolical nature of this description. The act of measuring was doubtless meant to impress on all the greatness and the glory of the city.

But the description of this city is still more wonderful as it proceeds, “And I saw no temple therein;” (different from the earthly Jerusalem) “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” No need of sun or moon to shine in it “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

This shows how this city transcends all earthly things, and that God and the Lamb are the supreme objects of admiration, and the source of glory and blessing. “And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.” Gates are shut against assault and attack; but these gates need not be shut; there is no enemy to attack, no marauder, or intruder to disturb the peace and happiness of the heavenly abode.

25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

26. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

27. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither **whatsoever** worketh abomination, or **maketh** a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The next feature of this description, in the last verse of the chapter, shows a still more exalted condition of that city, in the perfect purity and holiness of its happy inhabitants. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Beyond all the glory of golden streets and jasper walls and foundations garnished with precious stones is the glory of the moral and the spiritual character of the place. The highest tribute to that city is its holiness. The ruling attribute of God is his holiness, and the goal of all God's redemptive work is the holiness of the objects of redemption, and consequent on that holiness, their eternal blessedness.

Here we meet again those "which are written in the Lamb's book of life." We saw that book of life at the great judgment scene at the end of the twentieth chapter. There we saw the destiny of those who were not written in that book of life; here we see the destiny of those who were written in it. This serves to vindicate the interpretation we are presenting, that in this chapter we are dealing with the post-resurrection and post-judgment period; that whereas the twentieth chapter ended with the destiny of the wicked as determined by the great judgment, the twenty-first chapter continues the story in the destiny of the righteous as determined in that same judgment. All the human race divided into two classes; the righteous and the wicked; those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life, and those whose names are not found written therein.

CHAPTER 22.

1. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was **there** the tree of life, which bare twelve **manner** of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

5. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

CHAPTER XXII.

The division of chapters here is rather unfortunate. There is no line of cleavage in the thought at this point. The division should have been made between the fifth and sixth verses. The first five verses of this chapter goes on to describe that "home of the soul."

V. 1. John saw the river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. No sea there, symbol of restlessness and turmoil, but a river, symbol of springing verdure, refreshment, and perennial life.

V. 2. On either side of the river the tree of life. The word tree is used generically,—**many** trees of the species, on either side of the river. In Eden there was a "tree of life" from which man was excluded for his sin, a cherubim and a flaming sword guarding the way to it. Here in the last chapter of the Scriptures, when the story of redemption is completed, and the last act in the drama staged, we come again to that tree of life. Thus Genesis is linked with Revelation, and Eden with heaven, and the unity of the Biblical story disclosed.

Vs. 3-5. "And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it." Sin is gone, and where there is no sin, there is no curse. "The throne of God and the Lamb"—singular number, one throne.

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

“And they shall see his face.” The supreme blessedness of heaven is to look on the divine face. John further wrote, “And when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

“And they shall reign forever and ever.” As the word “they” has been repeatedly used in these verses to designate the saints, I take it in the same meaning in this clause,—another indication that the place where the saints reign is heaven. This closes the visions of the book of Revelation. The verses that follow are a conclusion to the book and bear much similarity to the introduction in the first chapter.

Here we leave the Apocalyptic features of the book and return from our excursion into the post-resurrection state, and take our place again at the historical standpoint where John began to write.

The first chapter should be re-read in connection with these closing verses to catch their real significance.

This sixth verse is almost a duplicate of the first verse of the book, showing that we are looking at the whole revelation from the outlook of the starting point,—a fit method of conclusion.

Both state that this book is a revelation from God, communicated by his angel “to show unto his servants the things that must shortly be done.” That was the prologue, it is also the conclusion, and it brings us back to the historical setting. John was writing these things to the churches of Asia with particular reference to their condition of suffering and jeopardy. In the beginning and the end he tells them that these things must shortly come to pass. The events predicted in this book were just beginning to break upon the church of that day, hence they were things that “must shortly be done.”

Verse seven begins, “Behold I come quickly.” It is an entire misconception to apply these words to the event technically known as Christ’s second personal coming, as so many do in these days. The last chapter like the first has its standpoint among the churches of the first cen-

8. And I John saw these things, and heard **them**. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

9. Then saith he unto me, See **thou do it** not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

10. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

tury. Christ, through John, is warning them of the storm about to break upon their heads, and "behold I come quickly" has evident reference to those judgments to which, in their day, they stood in close proximity,—the judgments of their persecutors described in the early part of the book. Only by arbitrarily wresting such expressions from the close-woven texture of the book can they be made to refer to some event long future to John and still future to our own age. He who grasps in one comprehensive conception the whole book, with its related details, will not commit such an error of interpretation. Verse seven ends with these words: "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book," almost an exact duplicate of chapter one, verse three.

V. 8. "And I John saw these things and heard them," bringing in again the human author of the book and reminding us of his place and time in the story.

V. 10. "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book." These words were not to be left in obscurity, but to be read, and made known to the churches of John's day, "for the time is at hand." These were things that vitally concerned them, then and there, they were written for their encouragement, to gird them in the conflict. They were not therefore to be sealed up but immediately circulated and proclaimed.

The careful reader will observe that these expressions have very definite reference to the purpose of this book, and therefore to its contents and interpretation. He who weighs them duly will be little inclined to assign the bulk of this book to a Tribulation, thousands of years distant from the writer and the persons addressed.

11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

V. 11,12. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still." If the wicked persists in his wickedness, refuses all warnings, and resists all the exhortations that are so plentifully scattered through this book, and which reach him through other channels, let him go on to his doom, for his doom will overtake him soon.

But let the holy be holy still, not recanting his faith nor repudiating his allegiance to his Lord even in persecution and death, for, "Behold I come quickly;" I will punish the transgressor, and reward the faithful. The faithful will not have to wait long for vindication, and the wicked will not long escape the justice he deserves.

Verse sixteen tells us: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." This is exactly parallel to the statements of the first chapter where John was sent to bear these messages to the seven churches of Asia. It is fair to assume that the churches of the first chapter and the churches of the last chapter are the same, and thus we **cannot escape the historical viewpoint.**

But all God's warnings are mingled with mercy, and he calls even the sinner, whose doom he threatens, to come and enjoy his grace. And he makes his invitation so broad that none can exclude himself from the call: "The Spirit

18. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

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

and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Mercy to the last, even when doom hangs over their heads. Back from the jaws of death and the stroke of judgment, Christ calls men to come and receive his mercy and drink of the water of life. This book, so full of judgments and the smoke of torment from the lake of fire, does not leave the reader with only such visions in his mind. The grace of God, and the mercy of God shines out grandly amid them all. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Vs. 18,19. The book draws to a close with a solemn warning neither to add to these words of God nor to take from them. Both these tendencies are prominent in the world today. A great host of interpreters are expert users of Jehoiakim's pen-knife, and an equal number on the other hand are reading into the Scriptures what isn't there. One evil is as bad as the other; and all alike should give due heed to the solemn admonitions of this closing word. The word of God must have honest treatment, delivered from the ruthlessness of cutters and slashers, and as well from the inoculations of allegorical and mystical interpreters. He who adds to, and he who takes away, are equally guilty.

V. 20. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." And John responds: "Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

This coming has, in my humble judgment, no reference to the technical second personal coming of Christ, else it would not be described as "quickly," and as something which in John's day "must shortly come to pass."

We believe that Christ will come again, we believe that coming will be personal, but we submit that it is an inaccurate and unscholarly piece of interpretation to apply these passages in Revelation to that event. But the "coming quickly" evidently referred to events in John's immediate foreground, and which concerned the churches to which he addressed these words. True reverence for the Scriptures will seek to understand them in the meaning intended by the writer, and will seek to put upon them the construction that is evident and natural from the writer's viewpoint. The wise expositor will hold fast to this sound rule of interpretation.

The judgment upon the Jewish and Roman persecutors, and the vindication of the persecuted saints most naturally fall in line with the significance of "coming quickly," and with John's response: "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

Thus we close this book of The Revelation so full of solemn warnings, and dire judgments, fitted to fill us all with awe, and to strike fear into the heart of the impenitent sinner. But through all the thunder of doom and the smoke of judgment we read the lesson of hope and cheer. The loftiest optimism grows out of the study of these solemn scenes.

Who can miss the lesson that the enemies of God and of the church are doomed to fall; but that Christ's cause is always and everywhere triumphant, that the omnipotent God is on the side of his church and no weapon formed against it shall prosper; but through all the revolutions and persecutions and dissolutions of earth and time he will bring it off triumphant and present it to himself a glorious church not having spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing. Every judgment recorded in the book of Revelation spells victory for the church of God,—and the end—the beatific destiny of the new Jerusalem where they shall be his people and he shall be their God.

SUMMARY.

We conclude with a brief resume of the contents of The Revelation.

Chapter I is the introduction, fixing the circumstances, human writer, and divine Revealer.

Chapter II and III are addressed to the seven churches of Asia; simple plain messages, and not allegorical or symbolical prophecies.

Chapters IV to XI inclusive are visions of events and judgments that lead up to and culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish state, the first great persecutor of the Christian church.

Chapters XII to XIX inclusive are visions of events and judgments that culminate in the overthrow of pagan Rome, the second great persecutor, and the triumph of Christ and his cause over the hostile forces of a wicked world.

Chapter XX embraces the binding of Satan, the millennium, the post-millennial period, and the universal resurrection and the final judgment of the human race, with the destiny of the wicked in the lake of fire.

Chapter XXI and five verses of Chapter XXII present the destiny and blessedness of the righteous in the new heavens and new earth, in which the new Jerusalem is particularly described.

Chapter XXII:6-21, is the conclusion of the book, reverting to the historical standpoint at the beginning of The Revelation.



BS2825 .C592
The message from Patmos ...

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00069 2006