

# ***The Book of Revelation***

CONSISTING OF A COMMENTARY ON  
THE  
APOCALYPSE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

BY

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## FOREWORD

The preparation of this work has been no easy task; it represents daily toil and midnight oil at intervals of time over a period of years. The author has no apologies for its production. It is the outgrowth and result in the processes of study and research, of an evolution in thought and a progression of views, which cover the period of years between preparation for the polemics of the public discussions on millennialism beginning in 1933 down to the present time. These notable occasions include the debates with Neal at Winchester, Kentucky; with Norris in Fort Worth, Texas; with Webber in Oklahoma City; with Tingley in Birmingham, Alabama; and with Matthews in Los Angeles, California.

In the *Neal-Wallace Discussion* of thirty-two years ago, and several others of later date, no positive position was espoused by the author relative to the time and content of Revelation. Being in the negative on the millennial reign of Christ on earth his obligation was to expose the error of that contention, to answer the arguments advanced by his opponent, and to disprove the millennial theories—and this was done. With reference to the book of Revelation, all of the several theories for its interpretation were fairly stated, but none espoused. Though an expression of acquiescence was made with reservations in the *Neal-Wallace Discussion* favorable to the continuous-historical view, as being probably “the most plausible theory,” no personal commitment to it was implicated. The casual reader of that discussion can observe the repeated reference to the period of the Destruction Of Jerusalem as indicative of the author’s inclination toward that view.

By several other polemical millennial encounters following the Winchester discussion the stage was set for *God’s Prophetic Word*, which has been widely circulated in a third printing of the new improved and enlarged edition. In this compendium on millennialism the author’s view had crystallized into a positive conviction that the book of Revelation belonged solely to the tribulation period of the



early churches, and that its symbols were fulfilled in the experiences of those churches. The last hurdle was to determine whether it was composed in the Neroan or the Domitian period of the Roman empire, and the conclusion has been irresistible, predicated on the solid arguments herein postulated, that the composition of the apocalypse was of a pre-destruction of Jerusalem date, under the reign of the first of the persecuting emperors of Rome—Nero Caesar.

There have been many other books on Revelation, authored by estimable and reputable writers, within and without our own brotherhood, assigning the events of the apocalypse to the successive centuries and to the end of the world; and there have been a few authors who have placed the contents of Revelation in the Neroan or Domitian period, but who invariably deviated from the premises in the exegesis of some of its passage in order to bring some of its events into the distant future. In these deviations and departures they slipped into conflicting and contradictory interpretations. The author of the present volume believes that once the chronology of the book of Revelation has been established as belonging to the period of persecution, beginning with Nero Caesar, the harmony of its contents requires all parts and events of the apocalypse to be explained accordingly, and not to be mixed with later history; and he has consistently pursued that premise throughout this work.

With this book, along with the *Neal-Wallace Discussion* and *God's Prophetic Word*, the author's work in the field of prophetic teaching has been done; and it is his firm conviction that altogether it has accomplished the complete refutation of all forms and phases and facets of modern millennialism.

The publication of these books has yielded no personal financial gain. The author has received no pecuniary remuneration from the sale of any of his published works. The constant and ever increasing assurance of the good that has been and is being accomplished by their circulation is his compensation and satisfaction. The funds received by the publishers are not for profit but are applied first to the

liquidation of the costs of printing and marketing, and thereafter to the publication of other books, several of which are ready for the printers and are pending publication. The business men who have made possible these publications, whose names are here withheld, will ever remain in the author's debt; and the personal friends and good people who have "at sundry times and in divers manners" rendered assistance and provided encouragement are far too many for a deserved and grateful mention. The years have taken their toll of faithful friends whose help in times of need and days of distress has left memories which time cannot erase. Numerous others are living and willing and ready to lend us aid. With a sense of deep gratitude the debt to these worthy men in the church of our Lord "in heaven and earth" is thankfully acknowledged, with the passionate prayer that the grace of the Father of mercies may direct our endeavors into further fertile fields of service in the cause of "his only begotten Son," who is over all, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," to whom belongs all honor and praise and glory.

FOY E. WALLACE, JR.

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# **BOOK OF REVELATION**

## **SECTION ONE**

### **AN APOCALYPTIC PREVIEW**



# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## AN APOCALYPTIC PREVIEW

The current phrase “the book of revelation” is at once connotative of the apocalypse of John on Patmos—but the whole Bible is the book of revelation from God to man, and is the culmination of a divine pattern and policy of God’s communication with man.

The first two verses of the Hebrew epistle in the New Testament states the whole policy of divine revelation: “God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” This One who was the agent of the creation of the universe and of man became the heir of all things in God’s revelation to man, the culmination and fulfillment of the scheme of divine revelation. This chain of revelation, from the voice of God in the garden of Eden to the voice of the blood of Christ on the cross, follows a divine pattern from its first forms of communication to the completion of the divine purpose in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Primitive revelation was *oral*, when God addressed the patriarchs in direct verbal communication. Then revelation took the form of *theophany*—the manifestation of God in symbols and types and visions, inclusive of the long series of representations of God in the early ages. After this, revelation assumed an *ethnic* character in the formation of the Hebrew race, the existence of which was but an early form of divine revelation, from which developed the *national* feature of revelation in the establishment and organization of the nation of Israel, the whole history of which was a phase of divine revelation. Finally, revelation reached its *documentary* culmination and was committed to the records of the Old and New Testaments.

This gradual course and progressive policy of revelation is the meaning of Hebrews 1:1-2. God spake in time

past (the old dispensations) unto the fathers (from Adam to Moses) by the prophets (the agents of ancient revelation) in sundry times (in various parts or portions) and in divers manners (employing many methods of communication), but in the last days (the gospel dispensation) God has spoken unto us by his Son (Jesus the Christ), whom he appointed heir of all things (spoken by the prophets). The various parts and portions were gathered into one, the many methods merged into the completed revelation, and the Bible thus becomes the longest thread of thought ever woven in the loom of time. This course of divine revelation is a basic principle of the present treatise.

## I

## PROPHECY AND THEOPHANY

The Book of Revelation being admittedly an *apocalypse*, the approach to its study requires a comparison of the meaning of certain related words, such as *dream*, *vision*, and *prophecy*.

The *dream* is usually understood as a vain image, formed in the subconscious mind or imagination, a series of thoughts and emotions of seeming reality, occurring during sleep. "He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night." (Job 20:8) From the earliest biblical times dreams were superstitiously regarded. Though the ordinary dreams and the dreamers, as well as the pretenders of the skill to interpret them, were condemned and forbidden, there are instances in the Bible where God made use of them to reveal his will and his purposes through individuals to whom he imparted the powers of interpretation. This use of dreams, and the supernatural gift to interpret them, manifestly had reference to future events known only to the Supreme Being who controls and disposes of the events of time. Since the fulfillment of divine revelation has been accomplished in the gospel of man's redemption, foretold in the Old Testament and made known in the New Testament, all claims of faith in the validity of dreams as indicative of future events are pretentious, presumptuous



and delusive, and must be regarded as impious in character.

The *vision* in the periods of direct divine revelations was a means by which God, through persons whom he appointed, revealed Himself and communicated his will. In this sense the vision was an oracle from God, and in the Old Testament the term had reference to the Most Holy Place of the temple, where God through the high priests revealed and declared his will to the people of Israel. (I Kings 6:5, 19, 23,; 8:6) In the New Testament the word is used only in the plural, as in Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; I Pet. 4:11, and refers to the inspired Scriptures which contain the will of God, revealed to the men of God who were "moved by the Holy Spirit." The oracles of the heathen world were uttered from their shrines, and at one time were consulted and held in repute and fear by kings, but did not long withstand the corruptive influences of bribery. The broad use of the term vision would include the divine oracles through the God-appointed men of the Old Testament, and the spiritually-gifted men of the New Testament, with the imparted powers of prophecy and inspiration during the time of the planting of the church in the miraculous age.

The word *trance* was of a more limited application. It is found only twice in the Old Testament (Num. 24:4, 16) and in both instances the word is printed in *italics*, indicating that it was supplied by the translators and not in the original manuscript. In the New Testament the word occurs three times (Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17). The etymology of the word denotes a state of mind separated from the external world and occupied only with mental or spiritual contemplations. Psychologically, this state of mind may result in the effects of natural causes; but in the case of Simon Peter in Acts 10 and 11, and of the apostle Paul in Acts 22:17, the interposition of supernatural power for special divine purposes is evident. Such mediums served all divine purposes during the progress of revelation and are no longer existent as a divine means of communication.

The word *prophecy* is the far more frequently used word of the Scriptures, and its common use in the religious

vernacular of today has been the root of all error. The prophets of the Old Testament were the "men of God" whom God authorized and inspired to reveal the things of the future, whose prophecies were not mere prognostication and human interpretation based on current events as the premise from which to draw their conclusions for future development. The character of true prophecy is such that there is no example in the present upon which to form a prophetic premise from which to draw a prophetic conclusion. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Pet. 1:20-21) Thus prophecy must be so far removed from anything in the present that there is no existing example of the thing prophesied upon which to base the prediction of the future event. Otherwise there would exist in the prophecy itself the element of human foresight.

The prophets of the New Testament were not of the same category—they belonged to the order of the "spiritual gifts" of I Cor. 12:1-11, and were assistants to the apostles in the development of the scheme of redemption revealed in the New Testament, as mentioned in Eph. 2:20; 3:1-5. The reference to *prophesying* in the Corinthian epistle designated a form of inspired teaching of the specially endowed teachers in the exercise of the "spiritual gifts" for the edification of the church during this period of miracles before the revelation of the will of God in the New Testament was completed. Prophecy does not exist in either category today—neither in the foretelling of future events nor in the form of the special *spiritual gift* endowment.

Finally, the term *apocalypse*—the word employed to name the *Book Of Revelation*—was applied to anything viewed as a prophetic revelation, in the sense of an unfolding vision. The *Book Of Revelation* is termed a prophecy only in the modified sense of a vision of events—but not the foretelling of the distant future, such as characterized the old prophets. Prophecy in the authentic sense of the foretelling of future events was necessarily so detached from anything in the present, upon which to base the

prophecy concerning things to come, that no example for it existed. But the whole vision of the *Book Of Revelation* was surrounded by existing events already in a state of development, and it was written in code as a warning to the churches living in that period, endangered by these conditions and facing the perils of persecution therein delineated. If Revelation is “a book of future prophecy,” then we are in a regime of prophecy still, and living in an age of prophecy. But the Lord declared in Luke 16:16 that “the law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” The phrase “until John” here does not mean until John appeared, but until John’s order ended. At the house of Cornelius, in Acts 10:37, Peter used the phrase “after the baptism which John preached.” Jesus said “until” John, and Peter said “after” John. Obviously *after* John meant *after the cross*; and *until* John meant *until the cross*. Jesus did not say that *the law* was until the cross—he said the law *and*. And what? The law and *the prophets* were until the cross—which means that prophecy ended exactly when and where the law ended. The word “until” expresses the point of termination. Paul states in Heb. 9:10, that the ordinances of the law were imposed *until* the new covenant—the point of termination. So both law and prophecy were terminated by the cross of Christ and “since that time the kingdom of God is preached” and all men “press into it” under the Great Commission, the preaching of it.

In reference to this same point, Jesus declared in Matt. 5:17, that he did not come to destroy the law or the prophets but to *fulfill* them. And in Heb. 1:1-2 the apostle affirmed that Christ is the heir of *all things* spoken by the prophets. The phrase *all things* in verse 2 must have an antecedent—Christ is the heir of what “all things”? The antecedent is in verse 1. In the former dispensation God spake unto the patriarchs by his prophets, the agents of divine revelation. In so doing he employed many methods and revealed his will in various parts. But “in these last days”—the gospel dispensation—he speaks unto us by the Son whom he appointed to be the heir of *all things* spoken by the prophets. Jesus Christ became the heir of the “all

things" spoken by the prophets in that he is the fulfillment of these "all things." In Eph. 1:10-11 the same apostle uses the same phrase "all things" in reference to the old and the new dispensations, saying: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ . . . according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will." The telescopes of the prophets were all focused on Jesus Christ; and the types of the old dispensation all pointed to Him who became "the heir of all things" thus spoken.

Like other students the author has in the past attempted to tread the tangled maze of "the future prophecy" theory of Revelation from A. D. 96 through the "dark ages" to the end of time—and like all the others who did so, he bogged down in the meshes of the wildernesses! Such an effort is as traditional as the Catholic calendar of popes from the apostle Peter in A.D. 33 to pope Paul VI of 1963—and is as erroneous as the Baptist claim of the chain of succession back to John on the banks of the Jordan—the links fall out.

The historians use the word anachronism—meaning an error in the order of time. Taking an event out of the period to which it belongs and assigning it to a wrong period of time is an *anachronism*. The multiple theories asserting that Revelation is a book of future prophecy are anachronistic. The internal arguments—the contents of the book itself—are preponderantly negative to the future-fulfillment theories, as many of the best scholars have admitted. After many years of intensive study it is the calculated conclusion of the author that the symbols of Revelation were fulfilled in the experience of the early church; that it bears a pre-destruction of Jerusalem date; and that it is prophetic only in the sense of an apocalyptic description of the struggle of the early church with the Jewish and Roman persecutors, and the spectacular and phenomenal victory over the pagan persecuting powers. To accept this sensible application of the apocalypse is to walk in the light; to reject it and follow the future theorization is but to wander in the dark—in the maze of the medieval centuries—in search of some historical counter-

part for symbols that were fulfilled in the corresponding events of the century of the apocalyptic disclosure. This "dark ages" network of prophetic bewilderment has so trammelled the *Book Of Revelation*, and made it to bristle with so many difficulties, that most readers and students of all other books of the New Testament shrink from any effort to understand and apply the symbolic language of the apocalypse, in the vague dread of the fearful future events of a wholesale onslaught of reckless fury to be launched against the church, either to overwhelm us in our day or to overtake our children in another day. So they stop reading the New Testament at the end of Jude.

All who have followed these prophetic meanderings have been misled into theological back alleys. The relation of the contents of Revelation to the persecution of the church is undeniable, and there is no reason to look beyond the period of these persecutions for their fulfillment. The symbolism of the book offers no reason for future vagaries. Its code language has an obvious purpose—the same purpose the military has in communicating messages in code to its personnel in order to withhold the information from the public. If John had written Revelation in plain literal language it would have precipitated a premature onslaught against the church which would have obliterated it from the Roman empire and wiped it off the face of the earth. It was therefore communicated in code for the information of the churches facing this era of persecution, and there were the spiritually-gifted teachers in every early church able to decode its message to the members. The Seer of Revelation speaks to his own time, which was, indeed, the time of crisis which the book envisions. The efforts to map an incalculable future, and attempt to force history to conform to it is a strange and curious method of exegesis.

With the foregoing deliberations in mind, the parallelism existing between the visions of the prophets in the Old Testament and the visions of John in Revelation will enhance the study preparatory to an exegesis of the book itself.

The visions contained in the Old Testament books presented in apocalyptic form the fortunes of God's people,

Israel—the exile and the dominion of the wicked lords, and in short the *cause of the Old Testament church*, the people of God, in conflict with the existing heathen powers. The apocalypse of John in Revelation similarly portrays the struggle and triumph of the early Christians—the New Testament church—in conflict with the existing Jewish and Roman persecuting powers in the period of their persecutions. All forms of apocalypse ended with the age of inspiration; there have been no revelations since, and there are no visions or apocalypses or prophecies of divine source today.

For every phase, feature and symbol of the visions of Revelation, there is a parallel in the Old Testament apocalypses. They are related in both character and description to the visions of John on the isle of Patmos. The classification and structure of the Old Testament books are essential to the application of the similar portions of the New Testament, such as the discourse of Jesus on the Mount Olivet, recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, bearing on the siege and destruction of Jerusalem—and with these the *Book Of Revelation*. The apocalypse of John is the climax, consummation and crown of all biblical vision.

Let it be remembered that there is a distinct difference between the prophets and prophecies in the Old Testament and the use of *prophecy* in the New Testament, as indicated in I Cor. 14:6, which reads: “Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?” Here, as in I Cor. 12:7-11, prophecy was listed among the “spiritual gifts” imparted by the apostles to edify the churches in the absence of the completed will of God in the New Testament, and it was a phase of inspired teaching in the churches. The prophets of the New Testament were thus the spiritually gifted teachers assisting the apostles in the completion of the plan of redemption, and they were not in the category of the Old Testament prophets. In the Book Of Revelation the word *prophecy* is used in the modified sense of *apocalypse* or vision. As before stated,

prophecy in the sense of the foretelling of future events must have been so far removed from anything in the present that there could have been not even an example in the present of that which was prophesied—otherwise the element of human foresight, based on the development of the current events, would have obviously existed. But the visions of John were based on existent conditions and surrounded by events already in a state of development. This fact removes the *Book Of Revelation* from the category of “future prophecy” and places it in the classification of apocalyptic vision relating to the fortunes of the New Testament churches in the midst of Jewish, Roman and Pagan persecutions, comparable to and parallel with the apocalypses of Ezekiel in relation to the fortunes of the Old Testament Israel.

The symbolic and typical system of the old dispensation, with its altars, visions and apocalypses, pointed to fulfillment in Christ and the church. The blood stream of the Old Testament began its flow from Abel’s altar and it did not cease until it was mingled with the crimson flow of the blood of Jesus Christ from the cross of Calvary.

There are multiple passages in the New Testament gathered around the fact that the types and symbols and prophecies all pointed to Christ and were thus fulfilled. That is why Heb. 1:1-2 declares that God appointed him to be the heir of the *all things* spoken by the prophets; and it is why Paul in Eph. 1:10-11 stated that in this dispensation God has gathered together in one *all things* in Christ; and it is why in Rom. 8:27-29 the apostle shows that the *all things* of God’s plan work together for the good, or the redemption, of all men who are called according to his purpose in the redemptive plan; and it is why in II Pet. 1:19 that Christ was proclaimed the *day star* of all prophecy; and that is why Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, in chapter 4, when seeking a figure of speech to adequately portray the grandeur of the One to come, selected the flaming orb of the day, and declared that the coming Christ should be the *Sun Of Righteousness* “with healing in his wings.” What the sun of the solar system is to the universe, Jesus Christ, the Sun Of Righteousness,

would be to the darkened world of humanity in sin. In fulfillment of the prophecies He came; the Sun Of Righteousness had arisen, and it cast the beams of splendor across the crest of Calvary, glimmering and glistening in the blood of the crucified Son of God, who thus became "the heir of all things" spoken by the prophets. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." (Lk. 24:44-45) "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree." (Acts 13:29) Jesus Christ is the heir of all things spoken by the prophets.

Having shown the object of prophecy and apocalypse, it is now in order to list the parallelism and application in the prophets of old and the apostle of Patmos.

(1) The sword and cherubims of Eden—Genesis 3:24.

The flaming sword placed in the garden, after the expulsion of man and his mate from their Edenic home, was the symbol of divine justice; but the cherubims beside it were the symbols of grace and mercy. Together they symbolized the righteous judgment of God mingled with the grace of redemption in the unfolding plan for the restoration of man.

(2) The ladder of Jacob's dream—Genesis 28:10-22.

This dramatic and familiar experience of Jacob was the symbol of the mediation between God and man, set forth in a long series of typical images in the Old Testament, which culminated in Jesus Christ, as indicated in Jno. 1:51.

(3) The burning bush of Midian—Exodus 3:1-10.

This burning bush in the desert of midian was a symbolic representation that the wrath of Pharaoh could not harm Moses any more than the bush could be consumed by the fire that was burning it; and that the people of God in Egypt were as imperishable in the afflictions of slavery as the bush was impervious to the elements which failed to



consume it, and that they would remain so before all enemies. Here is a forecast, not only of the fortunes of the nation of Israel, but also of the "Israel of God" in Gal. 6:16.

(4) The song of Moses—Exodus 15.

These richly poetic and prophetic verses compose a magnificent song of triumph and victory over Egypt and deliverance from Pharaoh's power and sovereignty. It is comparable to the *Song Of Moses And The Lamb* in the apocalypse of Revelation.

(5) The tabernacle in the wilderness—Exodus 25.

This unusually remarkable and amazing tent of the wilderness of Sinai was a symbol of the manifestation, presence and dwelling of God in and with his people—an outward demonstration of an inward dwelling among them, and is again set forth spiritually in II Cor. 6:16-18 and in chapters 11:9 and 21:3 of Revelation.

(6) The sword of Jericho—Joshua 6.

The siege and fall of Jericho were the signs and signals for the defeat and overthrow of any and all enemies who stood in the way of Israel, as further recorded in Josh. 5:13; 6:27. It has an unmistakable parallel in Revelation 11:8.

(7) The vision of Isaiah—Isaiah 6:1-13.

This imagery of the judgments and fortunes of Israel is paralleled with the experiences of the church in the apocalypse of Revelation 6:9—"How long, O Lord, how long."

(8) The dominion and death of Israel's lords—Isaiah 26:13-19.

The prophet here depicts the oppressions of Israel under the rule of the despotic lords of Babylon during their exile. The phrases in this vision, "they are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise . . . but thy dead men shall live," referred to Israel's deliverance from exile. The wicked lords were dead *as lords*, never to hold dominion over the people of Israel again; they should not again rise to power. But the people of God, who were represented as

dead in exile would live and exult in triumph over deliverance from the lords of Babylon. The expressions “thy dead” and “my body” refer to the collective body of Israel, which would rise from the dead state of captivity, and finds parallel in the figurative resurrection of the persecuted saints in the throne scene of Revelation, chapter 20-1-6.

(9) The new heaven and earth for Israel—Isaiah 66:22.

The deliverance of Israel from Babylonian exile is called their new heaven and new earth, when Israel returned from the Babylon of captivity to the land of their fathers. It finds symbolic parallel in the New Testament church emerging from the Roman persecutions into their new heaven and new earth of victory.

(10) The winged creatures of Ezekiel—Ezekiel 1:4-28; 10:1-22.

The visions begin with the view of the opened heavens—the symbols of God’s presence, and of his judgments in the winds and fire. The creatures and cherubims are the visions of divine activity, indicating that God was not in repose. It is the apocalyptic symbol of the restoration of what Israel had lost in captivity, a parallel which is repeatedly envisioned in Revelation of the emergence of the church from the period of persecution to restored peace, unity and spirituality in the victorious cause of Christ.

(11) The valley of dry bones—Ezekiel 37.

This vision is a graphic description of the grave of exile and captivity, and of Israel’s resurrection in deliverance from the Babylonian captivity. It parallels the resurrection of Revelation 20—the survival and resurrection of the cause of the martyrs.

(12) The temple of Zechariah—Zechariah 8:9-11.

The horsemen and horns of Zechariah’s vision symbolized that God’s hosts would put down oppressions, and restore and enlarge Jerusalem after the return of the exiles. The measuring of the temple, though it has a dual meaning, is a parallel of full import with the New Jerusalem of the gospel dispensation.

(13) The branch, throne, priest and ruler—Zechariah 6:19-15; Hebrews 4:7-11; 8:4.

The description of the priest and king on the throne and the apocalypse of the temple are typical of the spiritual priesthood and kingship of Jesus Christ, who in fulfillment of this prophecy was king and priest at the same time, as set forth in the Hebrew references and other parts of the New Testament, including the imagery of Revelation.

(14) The fountain for sin—Zechariah 13:1-6.

This chapter points to Christ and to the crucifixion, where he was “wounded in the house of his friends”—by the Jews who crucified him, as declared in Jno. 1:11. The vision channels the blood stream of redemption in the Old Testament forward to its crimson flow from the cross of Calvary.

(15) The living waters of Jerusalem—Zechariah 14:1-21.

The sweep of the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Zechariah carries the reader from Calvary to Pentecost and envisions the living waters of the gospel dispensation flowing from Jerusalem, as foretold in Isa. 2:2-4, and quoted by Jesus Christ in Lk. 24:47-48. Those apocalypses of the Old Testament merge into the remedial dispensation of the gospel.

(16) The image of Nebuchadnezzar—Daniel 2:1-45.

This visional dream of the colossal image was a prophetic apocalypse of the succession of the world monarchies of Babylonia, Persia, Grecia and Rome, culminating in an imagery of the kingdom of God in the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and in Daniel's visions of the years, months, weeks and days—all pointing to the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ “in the days of these kings,” fulfilled in the time of the Roman Caesars.

(17) The apocalyptic discourse of Christ—Matthew 24.

The signs of this chapter all point to the siege and the destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state. There

is no sign mentioned below the thirty-fourth verse of Matthew 24, and it reads: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." They were fulfilled before the passing of that generation, in the events accompanying the destruction of Jerusalem.

(18) The apocalypse of John in Revelation—in twenty-two chapters.

The apocalypse of John in Revelation is but the extension of the descriptions of Christ in Matthew 24, of the destruction of Jerusalem, the signs preceding it, and the events connected with it, before and after the siege. It represents the blending of the apocalypses of the old and new testaments, which form the basis of this treatise of Revelation.

## II

### AUTHENTICITY AND CHRONOLOGY

There is hardly a book in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, the authorship of which has not been disputed by the modern higher critics, to raise doubts and create distrust among all who accept the Bible as the Word of God. The seer of Revelation by-lines his apocalypse with the personal inscription, John. But the dissentient critics assert this signature to be pseudonymous, in keeping with the character of an apocalypse, and that it professes to be authored by someone other than the actual writer. All ecclesiastical sources ascribe Revelation to John the apostle, and this is confirmed by the testimony of the book itself, in chapters 1:4, 9 and 21:2 and 22:8.

The claim that it was composed by another John compares with the efforts to take Moses out of the Pentateuch; and with the double-Isaiah theory, which splits the prophecy, attributing a part of the book to a second Isaiah of a later date; and to confuse the authorship of James, John and Hebrews—all for the purpose of destroying the credibility of the Bible and the inspiration of its authors and its books. These issues have been settled by various capable scholars, such as McGarvey of the church, and recognized denominational theologians and scholars such

as Philip Schaff, the translator of the American Standard Version, published in 1901. and many others of his class who believe in the integrity, authenticity, credibility and inspiration of the Bible.

The claim regarding the differences in the language and style of Revelation, and of John's gospel and epistles, are of similar nature and intent. Such differences, if their existence is actual, are attributable to the apocalyptic character of Revelation—that it is not an epistle of John's composition, but was dictated to John by the angel; therefore it was the language of the angel and not in his own style. In his own epistles the Holy Spirit utilized John's personality, style and language, but in Revelation it was that of the angel of Christ as plainly stated in chapter 1:1. It must also be considered that John was "in the spirit" when Revelation was dictated to him, and was no more than the visional amanuensis to write from dictation the words of the angel of Christ.

The argument on the chronology of the apocalypse is centered on the choice between two dates that have been assigned to it—first the latter part of the Domitian reign about A.D. 96; second, the pre-destruction of Jerusalem date in the period of Nero Caesar, about A.D. 58-64.

The contention for the Domitian date is based mainly on two claims:

(1) That in the second century a "church father" named Irenaeus is said to have seen Polycarp who is also said to have said that John was seen by him in the latter part of the reign of Domitian—and that has been taken to mean that the apocalypse was seen, rather than John, at that time. The most that can be said of this contention is that it is rather a circuitous method of arriving at a point of chronology, and it sounds more like *hearsay* than *history*.

(2) On a supposition that apostasy in the Asian churches forms a case for the late Domitian date, based on the improbability of apostasies occurring so soon as the earlier date—hence, indicating a longer existence of the Asian churches than the earlier date would allow, as a necessary consideration of the time of the vision. But the

apostasies of the Galatian churches “so soon removed” from Christ, as stated in Gal. 1:6; and of the Hebrew teachers and members, as mentioned in Heb. 6:1-6 and 10:25-39, together seem to refute the impossibility of such an early apostasy of the Asian churches, if not altogether the claim of improbabilities that departures in the churches could have occurred and did occur that soon. The evidences of these early apostasies are also seen in such passages as Rom. 16:17 and I John 2:15. The argument for the late Domitian date of Revelation, therefore, lacks finality and is entirely too inadequate for proof.

The argument for the early Neroan date has solid internal proof—within the book itself—and external historical support by recognized and respectable scholars of high standing.

In the first book of the eight volume set entitled *The History Of The Christian Church*, by the world recognized historian, Philip Schaff, the author cited a group of twenty reputable scholars who assign the date of Revelation to the early Neroan period before the destruction of Jerusalem, who also applied its descriptions to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the overthrow of the Jewish theocracy, the fall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state—all in the fierce conflict with the Roman empire. Among these high ranking scholars are the names of Moses Stuart, Samuel Davidson, Ewald, Bleek, DeWette, and Cowles, who were named by historian Philip Schaff on page 837 of the volume mentioned. Other notable names added from other sources who hold to this early Neroan date are, Westcott and Hort (authors of the New Testament Greek Text), Farrar, Lightfoot, and as Paul said of the honor roll of Hebrews eleven, the time would fail me to tell of them all. But historian Schaff, on page 219, places the beginning of “the Neronian persecution” in A.D. 64, the tenth year of Nero, according to Tacitus; and the martyrdom of Paul and Peter either then or a few years later, and states that some of the best scholars in his estimation, from the internal indications, assign the apocalyptic epistle to the period between A.D. 60 and A.D. 70, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

In addition to the consensus of the views of such an impressive array of scholars as mentioned and commended in Schaff's history, there are the testimonies of other eminents such as Charles Wordsworth, of Cambridge (author of the multiple volume *Commentary On The Bible*, and the long out of print volume entitled *Lectures On The Apocalypse*; and Milton S. Terry, of the Garrett Biblical Institute of the Northwestern University (author of *Biblical Apocalypics*); and James M. MacDonald, of Princeton (author of *The Life and Writings Of John*).

In the *Commentary* and the *Lectures* Wordsworth stoutly opposed the various forms of millennialism and committed himself to the view of the early origin of Revelation. He argued forcefully against the theory of the future millennium based on the twentieth chapter of Revelation, saying in substance that the millennialists have all commonly supposed the apocalypse to be a continuous prophetic history, flowing in regular chronological stream from the beginning of the events to the end of time. Based on this assumption the millennial claims, that the twentieth chapter describes a future period beginning at the return of the Lord, cannot allow the transpiring of these events earlier than a time posterior to the coming of Christ. This conclusion is based on the erroneous premise of the late date for the apocalypse, disconnecting it from the events anticipated in its visions and imagery. The fundamental error is in the assumption that "the seven seals" extend from the apostolic age to the end of time. But the *Book Of Revelation* is not that kind of a consecutive prophecy, but rather a succession of immediate events.

It is further argued that the doctrine of the future millennium, based on the late date, caused the apocalypse to decline in repute because, said Wordsworth, "the doctrine of millennialism is repugnant to the Scriptures," and the misinterpretations resulted in the rejection of the entire apocalypse as unauthentic vagaries. But with these misconceptions refuted the book takes its proper place with the other epistles, dealing with things present and immediate, and respect for the apocalypse was restored. The kingdom of Christ is spiritual and future wars and revolu-

tions of political import are not the object of the visions in Revelation.

The importance of this phase of the study of Revelation justifies the further mention and consideration of *History Of The Christian Church*, by Philip Schaff, the international scholar, theologian and historian, who was the president of the translating committee for the American Standard Revised Version of 1885-1901, composed of *one hundred one* of the world's ripest scholars. The statements that follow, gathered from the first volume of his history, summing up the views of a galaxy of scholars, historians, theologians and commentators, weigh heavily in favor of the early Neroan date for the *Book Of Revelation*.

The gist of the testimony of these authorities, as confirmed by Schaff's history, is here submitted in the following abridged summation:

(1) That none of the leading apostles remained to record the horrible massacre (the destruction of Jerusalem) except John . . . who at all events was himself the victim of persecution and depicted its horrors in the vision of the apocalypse. . . . The seer must have had in view the Neronian persecution, the most cruel that ever occurred, when he called the woman seated on seven hills "drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," and prophesied her downfall as a matter of rejoicing for the "saints and apostles and prophets". . . . Some commentators discover a direct allusion to Nero, as expressing in the Nebrew letters *Neron Kesar* (Nero Caesar) the mysterious number 666.—Page 385-386.

(2) That the internal evidence of the apocalypse itself, and a comparison with the fourth gospel, favor an earlier date before the destruction of Jerusalem. . . . The unmistakable allusions to imperial persecutions apply much better to Nero than to Domitian . . . that John was exiled on Patmos under Nero, where he wrote the apocalypse not later than A.D. 68 or 69, not only before the destruction of Jerusalem, but before the Gospel of John, and at least twenty years before his death at Ephesus.—Pages 428-429.

(3) That the traditional date of the composition of the apocalypse at the end of the Domitian reign in A.D. 95 or



96, rests on the testimony of Irenaeus, and has the support of some learned defenders, but the internal evidence strongly favors the earlier date, before the destruction of Jerusalem.—Page 834.

(4) That the apocalypse is a Christian counterblast against the Neronian persecution, with Nero represented as the beast of the abyss, and the number 666 signifying the very name of this imperial monster in the Hebrew letters—*NERON CAESAR*—as follows: N-50; R-200; 0-6; N-50; K-100; S-60; R-200—the sum of which is 666.—Page 845.

(5) That the Neronian coins of Asia bear the inscription of Nero Caesar, the first and most wicked of all imperial persecutors of Christianity, and who was eminently worthy of being characterized as the beast of the abyss, and who was regarded as the embodiment of Antichrist.—Page 846.

(6) That the Hebrew letters for 666 correspond to the Latin and the Greek, with the last letter N having been dropped by a copyist from the Latin, making the sum 616, which was the number in some of the texts.—Page 846.

(7) That the apocalypse of Revelation is based on the Lord's discourse in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, describing the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.—Page 826.

On pages 253-270 in *Biblical Apocalypics*, Terry (of Northwestern) makes numerous arguments in favor of the early date, before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the salient points of which are condensed into the following summation:

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It is therefore not to be supposed that the language, or style of thought, or type of doctrine must needs resemble those of other production of the same author . . . The difference of language is further accounted for by the supposition that the apocalypse was written by the apostle at an early period of his ministry, and the gospel and epistles some thirty or forty years later.—Page 255.

A fair weighing of the arguments thus far adduced shows that they all (referring to early writers) excepting the statement of Irenaeus, favor the early rather than later date. The facts appealed to indicate the times before rather than after the destruction of Jerusalem.—Page 258.

Now, there is no contention that Galatians and Hebrews were written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and, to say the least, the most natural explanation of the allusions referred to is to suppose that the Apocalypse was already written, and that Paul and many others of his day were familiar with its contents. Writers who cite passages from the apostolic fathers to prove the priority of the gospel of John are the last persons in the world who should presume to dispute the obvious priority of the Apocalypse of John to Galatians and Hebrews. For in no case are the alleged quotations of Gospel more notable or striking than these allusions to the Apocalypse in the New Testament epistles.—Page 260.

According to the following exposition the prophecies of this book are an apocalypse of the fall of Judaism and the rise and triumph of Christianity. . . . In our analysis and exposition we have been guided by the principles of interpretation which have already been tested and illustrated in the apocalyptic portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. We thus find that John's Apocalypse is but an enlargement of our Lord's eschatological sermon on the Mount of Olives. It takes the same line of thought and translates it into the more extended and formal elements of apocalyptic symbolism. We have endeavored to support our exposition by abundant citation of illustrative analogies from the older scriptures, and to show how the successive revelations depict, in the most perfect harmony with apocalyptic methods, the fearful overthrow of that great city which had become a harlot . . . the corrupt and outcast Jerusalem . . . called Sodom and Egypt and Babylon.—Pages 269-70.

The subject-matter of the Apocalypse is here said to be *things which must shortly come to pass*. . . . The things thus destined to come to pass soon after the composition of this book were in substance the same as those of which Jesus discoursed on the Mount of Olives, and which are

written in Matt. 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. They concerned the approaching end of that age, the overthrow of Jerusalem, and with it the old covenant of Mount Sinai. . . . It was necessary that these things *come to pass shortly*, for Jesus had repeatedly declared that the consummation of that age and his coming in his kingdom would take place before that generation passed away.—Page 276.

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The exhaustive treatise on *The Life And Writings Of John*, by James M. MacDonald, of Princeton, was produced as a companion to the inestimable work of Conybeare and Howson on *The Life And Epistles Of Paul*, and ranks with it in worth and merit and scholarship. In this work the author, MacDonald, devotes an entire section to the affirmation that Revelation was written before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Doctor Howson, of England, the co-author of the aforementioned *Life And Epistles Of Paul*, edited the *Life And Writings Of John* with notes, and wrote its introduction after the death of its author. Apparently agreeing with and indorsing the views of the author, Doctor Howson reviewed the contents of the book, and in reference to the date of Revelation he commented as follows:

Concerning the Book of Revelation I will say nothing, except to invite attention to the arguments by which Doctor MacDonald endeavors to fix its date. The reasoning seems to me to be very well drawn out, which assigns the writing of this part of the Holy Scripture to a time intermediate between the Gospel and the Epistles of St. John.—Page xxxiii, Introduction.

It will be noted that in the foregoing statement, the editor, Doctor J. S. Howson, agrees that the apocalypse of John was written before some of the other epistles of John. In the order of arrangement in his book, MacDonald places Revelation first, with the history of it and his comments on its text and contents. The general trend and tenor of

the author's argument in favor of the early date of Revelation are observed from the following quotations:

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The question whether the Apocalypse was written at an early date or in the very closing period of the apostolic ministration has importance as bearing on the interpretation of the book. A true exposition depends, in no small degree, upon a knowledge of the existing condition of things at the time it was written; i. e., of the true point in history occupied by the writer, and those whom he originally addressed. . . . If the book were an epistle, like that to the Romans or to the Hebrews, it might be of comparatively little importance, in ascertaining its meaning, to be able to determine whether it was written at the commencement of the apostolic era or at its very close.

It is obvious that if the book itself throws any distinct light on this subject, this internal evidence, especially in the absence of reliable historical testimony, ought to be decisive. Instead of appealing to tradition or to some doubtful passage in an ancient father, we interrogate the book itself, or we listen to what the Spirit saith that was in him who testified of these things. It will be found that no book of the New Testament more abounds in passages which clearly have respect to the time when it was written.—Pages 151-152.

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Continuing and extending these comments on the internal evidences of the book, which favor the early date before the destruction of Jerusalem, author MacDonald concludes an argument with the statement: "So clear is the internal evidence in favor of the earlier date of the Apocalypse. And no evidence can be drawn from any part of the book favoring the later date so commonly assigned to it." (Page 167) Then in a final statement, at the close of the section on "The Date Determined From Internal Evidence," on page 171-2, the author concludes: "And when

we open the book itself, and find inscribed on its very pages evidence that at the time it was written Jewish enemies were still arrogant and active, and the city in which our Lord was crucified, and the temple and the altar in it were still standing, we need no date from early antiquity, not even from the hand of the author himself, to inform us that he wrote before that great historical event and prophetic epoch, the destruction of Jerusalem."

The present problem to this author is not to find the facts to sustain the premises of this treatise on the period to which the *Book Of Revelation* belongs, but rather to select them. Before passing from the external testimony of eminent authorities to the examination of the internal evidence of the book itself, this part of the section would not be complete without the inclusion of a few other references.

First: The chronology on Revelation on the title page of the Syriac Version of the New Testament assigns the date to the year A. D. 68—before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Second: Sir Isaac Newton advocated the early date, based on various references in the other epistles to the contents of the Apocalypse, as was later so ably affirmed by scholar Milton S. Terry. In reference to the view of Newton, MacDonald says on page 154: "Of all the arguments adduced by Sir Isaac Newton, none appears more cogent to Michaelis than that which is drawn from the Hebrew style of the Revelation, from which Sir Isaac had drawn the conclusion that John must have written the book shortly after his departure from Palestine, and before the destruction of Jerusalem."

Third: In a short and concise *Commentary On Revelation* published prior to 1885, by Robert Young, author of *Young's Analytical Concordance*, he states: "It was written in Patmos about A. D. 68, whither John had been banished by Domitius Nero, as stated in the title of the Syriac version of the book; and with this concurs the express statement of Irenaeus in A. D. 175, who says it happened in the reign of Domitianou—i.e., Domitius (Nero). Sulpicius, Orosius, etc., stupidly mistaking Domitianou for Domitianikos, supposed Irenaeus to refer to Domitian, A. D. 95, and most succeed-

ing writers have fallen into the same blunder. The internal testimony is wholly in favor of the earlier date."

Fourth: In a *Catechetical Commentary* on the New Testament (in question and answer form) William Hurte, of Edinburgh, Scotland, wrote in 1884: "That John saw these visions in the reign of Nero, and that they were written by him during his banishment by that emperor, is confirmed by Theophylact, Andreas, Arethas, and others. We judge, therefore, that this book was written about A. D. 68, and this agrees with other facts of history . . . There are also several statements in this book which can only be understood on the ground that the judgment upon Jerusalem was then future."

Fifth: In *Dissertations*, on the verbally parallel passages of the New Testament, pointing to the same tribulations Tilloch, a reputable early scholar, finds proof in these parallels for the early date of Revelation, before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the object of these various references in other books of the New Testament.

Sixth: All of the writers who assign the date of Revelation to the Domitian period admit the uncertainty of the contention, granting it by the repeated use of *probable* and *probability*, and, while depending on the "external" evidences, it is conceded that the *internal* indications overwhelmingly favor the earlier date. It is this fact that Philip Schaff emphasizes in the *History Of The Christian Church*, Vol. I, which should give ground for considerable pause for those who hold to the theory of a continuous historical pageant character of the Apocalypse.

Seventh: It has been mentioned that the chief witness for the late Domitian date is Irenaeus, of the second century, and the admissions of the ambiguity of his testimony renders its evidence null and void. The claim for the Domitian date, based on the statement of Irenaeus, depends solely on a quotation from Eusebius, who made some reference to Irenaeus having said that he had seen Polycarp, who in turn mentioned having seen the apostle John near the end of Domitian's reign, and from this is constructed

the conclusion that the apocalypse was *seen* at that time. But the argument has been reduced to a logomachy, a war of words, as to whether the statement of Irenaeus meant that *John* was seen or that the apocalypse was seen, and it has little, if any value, as evidence. Moreover it is stated by Jerome that in the year A. D. 96 the apostle was so aged and weak and infirm that "he was with difficulty carried to the church, and could speak only a few words to the people." This fact is incompatible with the interpretations of the alleged claim of Irenaeus, based on the reference in Eusebius. Furthermore, the fact that Eusebius denied that the apostle John was the author of Revelation, and assigned its authorship to what is called "another John," casts serious reflection on the worthiness of this particular testimony and renders its value as evidence virtually nil.

Commenting on the weight of the Irenaeus claim, as an argument touching the date of Revelation, Professor Milton S. Terry makes the following extended comment in *Biblical Apocalypics*:

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1. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, says that in his boyhood he had conversed with Polycarp, and heard him tell of his personal friendship with the apostle John. In speaking of the mystic number given in Rev. 13:18, he says: "If it were necessary to have his name distinctly announced at the present time it would doubtless have been announced by him who saw the apocalypse; for it was not a great while ago that (it or he) was seen, but almost in our own generation, toward the end of Domitian's reign." Here the critical reader (of the Greek sentence) will observe that the subject of the verb *was seen*, is ambiguous, and may be understood either of John or the Apocalypse. To assert, as some do, that the only grammatical and legitimate construction requires us to understand the *Apocalypse* rather than *John* as the subject of the verb, is arbitrary and presumptuous. To say the least, in fairness, one construction is as correct and legitimate as the other. But why should he say that *the book* was recently seen? The point that he aims to make

is that the man who saw the visions of the Apocalypse had lived almost into the times to which Irenaeus belonged, and had it been needful to declare the name of the Antichrist he would himself have done it. The time when John saw the Apocalypse was of no consequence for determining the name of the Antichrist so long as the apostle himself was yet alive. There is more reason for believing that the reference is to the Apocalypse in the fact that Irenaeus elsewhere says that John lived on into the times of Trajan.

2. But admitting that Irenaeus refers to the Apocalypse as having been seen near the close of Domitian's reign, his ambiguous statement is the only external evidence of any real value for determining the question. All other statements are later, and like the numerous statements of Eusebius, seem to be either repeated from Irenaeus or based on mere inferences. And it is notorious that even Eusebius, after Irenaeus and others, leaves the question of the authorship of the Apocalypse in doubt—Pages 256-57.

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The foregoing facts which are stated with authority and clarity by Terry, an accomplished scholar, are corroborated with the same indubitable and historical evidence by MacDonald in *The Life And Writings Of John*. This together with the statement of the scholarly Robert Young that Sulpicius, Orosius and others, had stupidly mistaken the reference to Domitius (Nero) for Domitian, and that "succeeding writers have fallen into the same blunder," has created so much divergence of opinion and confusion regarding the credibility of the Irenaeus quotation as to render it worthless as external evidence for the later date of Revelation.

Seeing now that the late Domitian date of A. D. 96 for Revelation, so far as external evidence is concerned, hangs on the slender thread of assumptions, mostly taken for granted, that are too inadequate for proof; and that there are no certain indications within the book itself for the assumed Domitian date; it is time to turn to the solid internal evidences—the proof within the book—that it was



written during the reign of Nero, before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem; that it was an apocalypse of the overthrow of apostate Jerusalem, the obliteration of the Jewish theocracy with the demolition of the temple, the calamitous downfall of Judaism and the catastrophic end of the Jewish state; that in apocalyptic imagery it describes the tribulations of persecution that engulfed the early church and overwhelmed its members in suffering; that the conflict with the persecuting powers ended in the victory of the Cause for which Christians suffered and martyrs died, symbolized in the triumphant scenes of a figurative resurrection and enthronement—and, all in all, that the visions of the *Book Of Revelation* were fulfilled in the experiences of churches of that period, and that the apocalypse does not extend beyond the era of the Roman persecution of the church.

To establish these premises it must first be shown beyond reasonable doubt, by the contents of the apocalypse itself, that John wrote the *Book Of Revelation* before the siege of Jerusalem which ended with its destruction—and to that task we now boldly turn, as an assignment confidently accepted.

Our proposition is that the argument for the early Neroan date has solid internal and external support. In the arrangement of these points there may be some repetitions necessary to complete the following classification:

(1) The witness of the Syriac Version of the New Testament to the date of Revelation.

Of this ancient version, Philip Schaff's *Dictionary Of The Bible*, under the term Syriac, has the following to say: "Syriac, the ancient language of Syria, a dialect of the Aramaean. The word occurs in Dan. 2:4, where it should be *Aramaic*, as it is in the Hebrew. The Chaldeans spoke in Aramaic in order to conform to the custom of the court, but this was not their proper or scientific language. . . . The language now called Syriac first comes to notice in the second century A. D., but ceased to be a vernacular before the twelfth century. It contains the most extensive literature of any Aramaean dialect, chiefly theological, and, of

the greatest importance, a translation of the Bible—commonly called Peshito (“simple”), because it was literal and not paraphrastic—which was made in the second century. It is the earliest of the direct versions.”

It is of “greatest importance” now to observe that this “earliest of the direct versions” places the period of the Apocalypse in the reign of Nero, hence, before the destruction of Jerusalem. This fact is cited by MacDonald, in *The Life And Writings Of John*, on page 171, as follows: “In the Syriac version this book is entitled: ‘The Revelation which was made by God to John the evangelist in the island Patmos, into which he was thrown by Nero Caesar’. And Theophylact, in the eleventh century, places the origin of the Apocalypse during the reign of Nero.” Here is a double-barreled combined internal and external testimony in favor of the Neroan date of Revelation.

(2) The historical background of persecution in the whole book and in all of the visions—2:10; 3:10.

The basis of the book is in the conditions that prevailed in the relations existing between the church and the empire. The whole foreground and background of the visions are the threats of impending persecution. The Roman emperor and his votaries were to become the instruments of Satan in the empire’s furious assault on the church. Clement of Rome said that “the Neronian persecution had been a wholesale onslaught of reckless fury.” This persecution was directed against both the Christians and Jews, for the Christians were loyal to Christ, and the Jews were loyal to their Law. It was the Roman requirement that the Christians and the Jews must worship the emperor, compliance with which edict would constitute disloyalty to the Supreme Object of worship and of adoration by the orthodox Jews, and a complete renunciation of Christ by all Christians—and it was this edict which initiated the conditions that called forth the *Book Of Revelation*. Here both Judaism and Christianity were involved for no lower loyalty to an earthly king or empire could warrant compliance or even a policy of compromise. Both Judaism and Christianity were incompatible with the Roman religion. With respect to Juda-

ism, the empire could tolerate it; but the mere profession of Christianity was pronounced a crime worthy of death.

In the reign of Nero a great conflagration enveloped Rome. The old saying that "Nero fiddled while Rome burned" is due to the common belief that he instigated the burning of the city. High authorities considered the emperor guilty, others were inclined to leave it an open question, but whether guilty or innocent the emperor must have a scapegoat, and he found it in Christians. At the first Christianity had been regarded by the empire as merely a new Jewish sect, but it had now come into a position of distinction from Judaism, and the Roman world was aware of this distinction. The riots which had erupted in the reign of Claudius had created prejudice and engendered hatred against them in provinces other than Judea, and they were commonly believed guilty of the crimes for which they were charged. Before Rome burned the people of the empire had come to recognize the distinction between the Jews and the Christians, and the trials and martyrdoms which were staged subsequent to the burning of the city publicly crystallized this line of cleavage between Judaism and Christianity. In this hatred of the Christians the Jewish authorities instigated the persecutions of the church.

It is a fact of history that the burning of Rome occurred in A. D. 64 and that it was the event which precipitated the persecutions. Inasmuch as the persecutions in the Apocalypse were impending, and yet lay in the future, it identifies the date of the *Book Of Revelation* with the early part of the reign of Nero and before the destruction of Jerusalem. And it is timely to state here that it was Nero who gave the order for the siege of Jerusalem which resulted in the destruction of the city, followed by the tribulations symbolized in the visions of the Apocalypse.

(3) The reference to the early and impending events mentioned in the preamble to the visions—1:2-3.

The exhortation to "read, hear and keep" the contents of the book, and the reason stated for so doing in the phrase "for the time is at hand," is manifestly based on the im-

minence of these events; and if they were not to occur in their own time there was no point for such urgency of exhortation, considering the suppositions of the theory that makes these events so far removed from them and even now remote to us. These events had application to the persecutions resulting from the destruction of Jerusalem; the conflict with the powers of heathenism in the Roman empire, and in ruin of the Great City (Jerusalem) "where the Lord was crucified," which had become apostate—"a faithful city turned harlot." The description of these events is parallel with and an extension of the same events more briefly pictured in the Lord's summary of them in Matthew 24. In this light the Apocalypse has a clear and unforced meaning and immediate application. But the application of these time elements and allusions, to events millenniums after the date of the visions, and to the centuries yet to come, renders the whole book unreal, its language unnatural, its interpretation conjectural, its understanding impossible, and is incompatibly inconsistent with the purpose, completion and fulfillment of divine revelation.

(4) The early persecution of and opposition to the church by the Jewish authorities—2:9; 3:9.

On this point the pre-destruction of Jerusalem date of Revelation is indicated by apparent references to the persecutions of that time proceeding from the Jews. The early persecutions of the church in the apostolic age were in consequence of Jewish instigation, due to the bitter hatred among the Jews for those Jews who, in their view, had defected from Judaism by becoming disciples of Jesus Christ, which was the cause of the fierce zeal of the Jewish population against Christians. At the first, the Christians had protection and shelter from these Jewish persecutions by the Roman government, which considered Judaism and Christianity as nothing more than two major Jewish factions engaged in a quarrel between themselves, but later the government itself extended the persecution of Christians which had been initiated and instigated by the Jews in opposition to the church. The reference to these Jewish

persecutions in the chapters and verses named identifies the date of Revelation with these early Jewish persecutions.

(5) The activities of the Judaizers mentioned in the letters to the seven churches—2:1-6; 11:13.

There are clear and repeated references in the letters to the churches, and other parts of the apocalypses to the prevalent activities of the Judaizers, and to their existence and presence in the churches as a source of strife, trouble, discord and contention. But after the destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the overthrow of their theocracy and the end of the Jewish state, the activities of the Judaizers became nonexistent, and their influence null and void.

(6) The definite existence of the Jewish state at the time of John's visions—6:1-17; 9:1-21.

The contents of these chapters are based on the existence of the tribes of Israel, and the conditions prevailing in the Jewish state against which the warnings of imminent events were issued and directed. The description of the second rider fits the magisterial authority of the Jewish officials opposed to the church, and the third rider describes the imperial power to execute wrath and judgment. The symbols of chapter eight are Jewish and directed at the Jewish theocracy, and connects the events with immediate subsequent Jewish history.

(7) The representation in the vision that the temple of Herod was still standing—11:1-19.

The temple, the court and the altar, were referred to as yet intact, and the reference in present tense to "the great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified," clearly refers to Jerusalem, and reveals that neither the city of Jerusalem nor the temple of Herod had been overthrown and destroyed—but their utter demolition was at hand and was shortly to occur. The parallel of Matthew 24 points to the fulfillment in A. D. 70, in the siege and desolation of Jerusalem, and

necessarily indicates an earlier period, before A. D. 70, for the date of the Apocalypse.

(8) The indication that other apostles than John were known to be living—2:2.

If it were known that John alone survived, the claim of the pretenders “which say they are apostles,” thus claiming that there were other apostles than John yet alive, would have been so palpably false as to have been completely untenable, and none would have dared to make the claim. If the churches were aware that no other apostle than John was then living, as they would have assuredly known if the late date is correct, such a claim would have been so utterly false that no such crisis over it could have existed in the Ephesian church as that which made it necessary to bring the imposters to trial.

(9) The date of the Apocalypse and the time of John’s visions are definitely assigned to the period of the sixth Roman emperor—17:10-12.

This reference marks the period when John wrote Revelation. It is the evidence within the book which decides its chronology. There had been five Caesars before the then reigning emperor. Of the “seven kings” the sixth was reigning and the seventh was yet to come—“five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come.” The order of the five is necessarily as follows: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius—the sixth was Nero, and the seventh, which was “not yet come,” was Domitian. Though Julius was the head of the Roman Republic which merged into the empire, it would be folly to attempt to name the Roman Caesars and leave Julius out. There can be no reason for doing so, except to force the date of Revelation into the later period of Domitian, and it does not have the appearance of the honesty that ennobles authors and editors, not to mention historians. The name *Caesar*, which became the official title of the Roman emperors, was itself derived from the first and most famous of them all—Julius Caesar. Commenting on the passage in *The Life And Writings Of John*, on page 164, MacDonald says: “We have then only

to reckon the succession of emperors, and we must arrive with certainty at the reign under which the Apocalypse was written or was seen." And beginning with Julius Caesar he adds: "It stands thus: (Julius) Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius; these make up the five who have fallen. 'One is'—Nero." MacDonald then adds: "The ancients, although the empire was not fully established till the time of Augustus, reckoned from Julius Caesar."

Considering the same passage in point, Milton S. Terry, in *Biblical Apocalypics*, comments on page 259, as follows: "This (the early date) receives additional confirmation in the fact that the book assumes to belong to the period of the sixth king as mentioned in 17:10, 'the one that now is', and if we follow the most natural method of reckoning the Caesars, and the one which appears in Suetonius and Sibylline Oracles, we have (1) Julius, (2) Augustus, (3) Tiberius, (4) Caligula, (5) Claudius, (6) Nero. The reign of Nero extended from A. D. 54-68, and somewhere between these dates we must assign the composition of the Apocalypse."

These are the authentic facts of history and they identify the time with the reign of Nero, which eliminates the Domitian date. The five preceding rulers had passed and the sixth—Nero—was on the imperial throne. This succession of Caesars, and the person and time of the ruling emperor, places the date of the *Book Of Revelation* before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The only escape from this conclusion has been attempted in an effort to qualify certain vicegerents and mock rulers as *bona fide* emperors, and thus place them in the line of succession. This is done in the effort to eliminate Nero as the sixth emperor, but it would also clutter up the whole line of emperors, eliminate Domitian also, and nullify the whole argument for the Domitian period as the date of the Apocalypse. Without the juggling of some commentators, who are bent of the continuous historical and dark ages theory of Revelation, the facts of chronology within the book itself are understandable.

(10) The mystic number employed, as a code name for

the beast, identifies the time of the Apocalypse with the persecutions of Nero—Chapter 13:16-18.

It has been shown by various scholars that the Hebrew consonants, the Latin letters and the Greek characters, in the official name of *Nero Caesar*, when broken down into numerals, all add up to the sum of 666. An impressive column of scholars, commentators and historians have verified this fact with a finality that cannot be questioned.

The juggling of these numerals in different languages can be made to represent numerically this number, in the Latin, for instance, the name of *Lateinus*, a medieval pope, and a variety of others in like fashion—but a *relevant* name is required to harmonize with the text of the Apocalypse. By reason of the fact that the *sixth* ruler is mentioned in the context, nothing can be more relevant to the vision nor conclusive from the premises than for Nero-Caesar to be the persecuting beast of this mystic number. In the search for a “beast” to fit the number—why skip that old beast! He was there, and is in both the Hebrew and Greek alphabets, according to the scholars; and in the words of one of them we have only to reckon the succession of the Roman Caesars from Julius to Nero in order to determine the date of Revelation and the period of time to which it belongs.

(11) The predication in the vision of the kings that the seventh ruler had not arrived places the time of the Apocalypse in the period of the Neroan reign before the siege of Jerusalem—17:9-11.

That these verses refer to the city of Rome and the succession of Caesars cannot be reasonably disputed. The city is identified by the reference to the “seven mountains” describing the famed seven hills of Rome. The “seven kings” are identified by the expression “five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come.” The explanation that the seven kings refer to seven future dynasties offers no sound reason for such latitude of interpretation by mere assertion. The text of the vision says *seven kings*, the *five* preceding the *sixth* having fallen, and the *seventh* not having yet come, it follows that the expression “and one



is" refers to Nero, the sixth, in the line of succession from Julius Caesar. It allows no alternative choice, and those who consider these points without pre-possession of mind concerning the continuous historical pageant character of Revelation can come to no other conclusion than that of the earlier date, in the reign of Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome in succession to Julius, the first of the Roman Caesars.

(12) The existence of only seven churches in Asia, at the time of the vision, sets the date before the destruction of Jerusalem—1:4-11.

By reason of the fact that the preamble of the book addresses *the seven churches*, it is evident that the vision was received when there were only seven churches in pro-consular Asia. But after the destruction of Jerusalem, as a result of the diffusion of Christianity, the Asian churches were numerous, as was foretold in the Lord's description of these events in Matthew 24, verses 30-31: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The darkening of the sun and the moon, and the falling of the stars, and the shaking of the heavens, in verse 29, were all figures of speech to describe the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state; and the mourning of all the tribes of the earth meant that all the Jewish families in the whole empire had knowledge of the siege and desolation of Jerusalem, and mourned over the sorrows befalling the Jewish state and their beloved city. The sending of his angels to the four winds, meant the expansion of the church over the whole empire by the emissaries of the gospel, after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The passage of the Apocalypse, Rev. 11:15, is the parallel of the Lord's statement in Matthew, and it reads: "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 forever and ever." Like the Matthew passage, this verse referred to the expansion of the gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the everlasting extent of the kingdom and reign of Jesus Christ.

It has been offered as a counter argument that the churches of Colosse and Hierapolis were both in Asia, and are not included in the mention of the seven churches in the letters of the Apocalypse. But the historical fact is that after "the great earthquake," by which this region was so dreadfully shaken, that these cities were not rebuilt and the congregations merged with Laodicea. Geographically, these cities were separated by only a few miles, and it was entirely feasible for the congregations to consolidate after this catastrophe. So the churches named did not maintain a separate existence after the earthquake, about the middle of the century, before the date of the Apocalypse. This fact is verified by Philip Schaff, in his *Dictionary Of The Bible*, in the article on LAODICEA, which reads: "Laodicea, the old city of Diospolis . . . a few miles distant from Colosse and Hierapolis . . . When in the middle of the first century of our era (A. D.), an earthquake destroyed Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea, the latter was rebuilt by its own inhabitants." So Laodicea was rebuilt but Colosse and Hierapolis remained in ruins, and the churches merged with the Laodiceans. In the article under COLOSSE, Schaff says: "A city of Phrygia, on the Lycus . . . twelve miles above Laodicea . . . The town is now in ruins."

If further evidence is required on this point, on page 155, in *The Life And Writings Of John*, MacDonald states that in the reign of Nero an earthquake overwhelmed Laodicea and Colosse, and that the church at Colosse was not restored, but presumably became identified with the Laodiceans. In a volume entitled *Dissertations*, by Dr. Tilloch, he states on page 32, that "There were but seven churches in Asia when the Revelation was given."

These authorities settle the history angle, and the premise stands, that there were only seven churches in Asia Minor when John wrote the Apocalypse, which is a salient point in settling the time in which it was written. The

evidence is accumulative in favor of the Neroan period before the destruction of Jerusalem for the date of Revelation.

(13) The numerous exhortations in the letters to the seven churches identify the date of the Apocalypse with the experiences of the churches of that period—1-3.

There are terms employed and expressions used in each of the seven letters which clearly indicate that the events envisioned would come within the life and experience of these churches.

1. The repeated use of the phrase “he that overcometh,” in all seven of the letters, is indicative of an imminent trial of faith by ominous impending events, forecasting a momentous struggle. This word “overcome” is given an unusual emphasis in both the apocalypse and in the epistle of John, and the uses of it in his epistle may well be portents of the same approaching crisis.

2. The exhortation in chapter 2:10, for them to “fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer,” is more than a general admonition for faithfulness in ordinary trials and temptations; it is rather of a portentous nature—a note of special warning concerning fateful forebodings of the impending experiences, in which “ye may be tried,” and which held them in such fearful suspense.

3. The positive warning, “that ye shall have tribulation ten days,” can have no other meaning than that they themselves were to pass through this period of *ten days* tribulation. There were exactly ten successive persecuting emperors, beginning with Nero, as mentioned in chapter 17:10, and there can be no manufactured events of the future which could more accurately fulfill the figurative *ten days* period, which is supported by the actual history of that time.

4. The further exhortation to this church, in the words “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,” indicates that this period of tribulation would come upon *them*. The expression “be thou faithful unto death” cannot be taken to merely mean *come to church every Sun-*

*day and you will go to heaven after death.* The phrase “unto death” here means martyrdom; and “a crown of life” is in contrast the reward. Paraphrasing the passage, it reads: Be faithful even unto martyrdom and your crown will be life. It is an advance martyr scene, as verse 10 shows: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death”; and it finds fulfillment in the victory scenes of chapter twenty. To apply these things of Revelation to a yet historical future is to “wrest the scriptures” and remove them from the context.

5. The commendation of patience, in chapter 2:19, coupled with the advance warning to the church at Thyatira that the supreme trial to come upon them was in the seer’s crystal, was a dread portent of a yet unleashed assault upon the church. “And the last to be more than the first”—they were standing upon the threshold of events which would require patience in greater degree than at the first, or from the beginning of the church. The further indication of this truth is in verse 25: “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.” The application of this verse to the second advent of Christ would mean that in this letter the Lord Jesus Christ deceived the church at Thyatira into believing that his second coming would occur in the lifetime of that church. But it does mean that He would come to them in the events described, and it proves that these events would transpire in that period of time.

Still further proof that this is the meaning of these references is in the next verses, 26-27: “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.” This is a clear reference to the victory of the church over these persecutions and the defeat of the persecuting powers. Their “power over the nations” referred to the influence of the gospel; and ruling “with a rod of iron” simply meant the invincible force of the truth; and the “breaking into shivers” of the nations referred to the defeat of the persecuting powers in the triumph of the Cause for which these early churches suffered in tribulation.

6. The promise of the preservation of the Philadelphian church through this period of trial, in chapter 3:10, is nothing short of *prima facie* evidence that the events of the Apocalypse belonged to and transpired in the period of the experiences of these existing churches—3:7-13.

The pivotal passage in the letter to Philadelphia is the tenth verse: "Because thou has kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (trans. "the hour of trial"), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here is the augur of the frightful onslaught that would strike the church in all parts of the Roman world. It is the invulnerable evidence that these portended events belonged to that period of time, and to assign them to a continuous historical future is anachronistic—an error in the order of time. And to say that the passage means that these events would not occur in the lifetime of the Philadelphian church reduces the Lord's promise to the nonsense of saying that he would keep them from the hour of trial by not letting the hour of trial happen! The Lord's promise to the Philadelphian church is historically factual—that hour of trial did come upon them, and the church at Philadelphia was kept, or preserved, through it. Here is the divine assurance for the preservation of the faithful then living through the period of persecution, designated *the hour of trial*, and these conclusions are irresistible and impregnable.

7. In a final reference to the contents of the letters to the seven churches, as evidence of the early date of Revelation, it is germane to mention the senses in which the promise of the coming of the Lord are employed.

The three key words of Revelation are "signified," "shortly" and "quickly." The visions were *signified* to John—set forth in signs; of things that were *shortly* to occur—these impending events of that time; and the Lord promised to come *quickly*—his presence in the occurring and transpiring events.

The coming of Christ in the Scriptures has various connotations: It refers to his first advent into the world (Gen. 49:10; Matt. 2:6; Rom. 11:26); to his second advent (Acts

1:11, Heb. 9:28); to his chosen apostles in the church (Jno. 14:3); to the coming of his kingdom on Pentecost (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1); to the destruction of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-4; Matt. 24:30, Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27); to the death of a Christian at the end of life (Psa. 23:4; I Cor. 1:7-8); to the end of time (I Cor. 11:26; I Thess. 4:15); to the last judgment (Matt. 25:30-31; II Thess. 1:6-10); and to the rewards and judgments in the events of trial described in Revelation, as mentioned in the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2:5; 2:16; 2:25; 3:3; 3:11; 3:20).

In the counsels to the declining and backsliding churches there are such phrases as "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place"; and, "I will come to thee quickly and fight against them"; and, "I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee"—these are the warnings of the Lord's coming in the events of judgment. But to the churches in which he found nothing to condemn there are the phrases: "That which ye have already hold fast till I come"; and, "I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown"; "and I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"—these are the promises of his spiritual presence and reward.

In the beginning John mentioned that the things to be *signified* in the apocalypse would *shortly* occur, and that the Lord Jesus would come in these events which were *at hand*. At the end of the visions he declared that "the things must shortly be done," and the Lord said, "behold, I come quickly"—meaning that this coming of the Lord would be concurrent with the events. The seer, therefore, says at the end of the visions: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It is not agreeable with the context to make this last statement of Revelation refer to the Second Coming Of Christ. The epilogue must comport with the prologue (the ending with the beginning), and it means simply, that as the events that had been signified were so soon to occur, and the Lord had promised his presence, "even so, come

Lord Jesus." And He did come in the transpiring events of the Patmos vision.

There is no truth so evident, when the facts are brought into proper focus and perspective, as that of the present thesis—that the *Book Of Revelation* was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and its visions fulfilled in the experiences of the early church.

(14) The parallels between the Lord's forecasts of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24, and John's visions in Revelation, join them together as being descriptions of the same events and as belonging to the same period of time.

The following comparisons will show Revelation to be an enlargement and extension of the discourse on Mount Olivet in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew (and in the parallel chapters of the thirteenth chapter of Mark and the twenty-first chapter of Luke), of which Jerusalem and Judaism and the Jewish state were the subjects and objects.

1. Matthew 24:34—Revelation 1:1.

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"—Matthew.

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass"—Revelation.

2. Matthew 24:21—Revelation 1:9, 3:10, 7:14.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"—Matthew.

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation" . . . "And ye shall have tribulation ten days" . . . "These are they which came out of great tribulation"—Revelation.

3. Matt. 24:2 and 23:37—Revelation 11:8, 18:10, 21.

"And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" . . . "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth

her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"—Matthew.

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" . . . "When, they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come" . . . "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more"—Revelation. (In the commentary on these verses it is shown that as Jerusalem was "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, in 11:8, the Babylon of chapter 18 is the symbolic name for Jerusalem).

#### 4. Matthew 24:16-21—Revelation 12:6.

"Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him that is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes . . . For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"—Matthew.

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

(In the commentary on these verses it is shown that the 1260 days is the exact length of the siege of Jerusalem, and the exile of the faithful in the mountain wildernesses).

#### 5. Matthew 24:7-8—Revelation 18:8.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrow"—Matthew.

"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"—Revelation.



## 6. Matthew 24:31—Revelation 11:15.

“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”—Matthew.

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever”—Revelation.

This last parallel refers to the end of the period of persecution and visualizes the success of the church, when gospel emissaries (designated as *angels*) would proclaim the gospel to the four winds—“from one end of heaven to the other”—as described in the Matthew account. And in Revelation the scene envisions the universal sway of the kingdom of Christ by the spread of the gospel, as the kingdoms of the world became the kingdoms of God and of his Christ. Both passages describe the universal expansion of Christianity after the destruction of Jerusalem.

(15) The statement implying that John expected to leave Patmos, after this apocalypse, and relate the visions in various parts of the empire, indicates the date and period of the revelation—10:11.

After the visions John expected to be an active emissary to prophesy *again*, “before (or *among*) many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” It is hardly possible, and altogether improbable, that John, at the supposedly advanced age of ninety-six, would or could have undertaken a mission requiring several years to accomplish. And in the light of the testimony of Jerome, that in the year A. D. 96, the apostle John was so aged, weak and infirm, that “he was with difficulty carried into the church, and could speak only a few words to the people,” such an itinerary would have been wholly impossible. It adds evidence to the argument for the earlier date of Revelation and the younger age of John.

(16) The philological argument, based on the language element in the Hebrew-Greek idioms which abound in the book, is considered by many worthy scholars as solid proof for the early date. The chronology of an ancient document

can be established by the period to which its language belonged. The Septuagint version of the Hebrew Old Testament (the Greek Old Testament) introduced the Hebraistic element into the Greek, about 270 B. C. It is claimed by these scholars that this element is definite in the style and language of Revelation; and that the comparison with *John's Gospel* lends weight to the evidence that Revelation was composed many years prior to both the gospel and the epistles of John. And any supposition to the contrary has been declared to be a defiance of all observation and experience in critical processes. The fact that Hebraistic element had disappeared at the later time assigned to Revelation is considered by this class of ranking scholars as invulnerable evidence of the early date, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

(17) The various allusions in the other New Testament epistles to the contents of Revelation indicate that it was written earlier than these other epistles.

There are several passages in Galatians and Hebrews which are considered related by quotation to Revelation. The reference in the fourth chapter of Galatians to "the Jerusalem which is above . . . the mother of us all," and in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews to "mount Zion . . . the city of God . . . the heavenly Jerusalem . . . to the innumerable hosts . . . general assembly . . . and church of the firstborn"—these phrases are considered too familiar in the apocalypses of Revelation not to be indirect quotations. There has been no disagreement over Galatians and Hebrews having been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and as John manifestly did not compose "the warp and woof" of the visions and apocalypses of Revelation from the few expressions in two preceding epistles, it rather follows that these allusions in the epistles were adaptations from Revelation. As Peter's reference to the epistles of Paul in II Peter 3:15-16 proves the prior existence of Paul's epistles, so these allusions indicate the earlier date of Revelation.

(18) The references in Revelation to the once faithful city that had become harlot identifies the apostate Jerusa-

lem as the spiritual Babylon of the Apocalypse—Rev. 17:5; Isa. 1:21.

As the prophet in the Isaiah reference compared the former apostasies of Jerusalem to harlotry—"How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers"—so the seer in Revelation envisioned apostate Jerusalem as the harlot and the mother of harlots in this later apocalypse. There is not a line in either secular or sacred history to prove that Rome was ever a faithful city; but the once faithful Jerusalem that *turned harlot*, the apostate Jerusalem, the spiritual Babylon, was the harlot city of Revelation, and its fate along with the Jewish theocracy was the object of John's visions. (Further references to these points will be found in the comments on these verses in the commentary section of this work).

(19) The nature of the contents of the New Testament apocalypse as counterpart to the apocalyptic books of the Old Testament, which parallel the experiences of the persecuted church of the New Testament with the exiled Israel of the Old Testament, is convincing evidence of the period to which it belongs. This sustained relation the old and new testament apocalypses carries through to the emergence of the church from the period of the Roman persecutions, in correspondence with the deliverance of Israel from the captivity of Babylonian exile. It is a clear parallel with the events and the date of Revelation, and the fulfillment of its symbols and visions must be brought within this range in order to be consonant with it.

(20) The coming of the Lord, signified in the events accompanying the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, is further evidence for the fulfillment of the apocalypses of Revelation in that period—1:7.

As the prophecy of Zech. 14:1-2, on "the day of the Lord," foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, so "the coming of the Lord" in Rev. 1:7 applies to the events attending its destruction. The Jews that "pierced him" and the "tribes" (the Jewish families) over all the earth "mourned" for the destruction of their city, the demolition of their temple,

the downfall of their theocracy, and the end of their Jewish state.

(21) The announcement of warning to the members of the churches living at that time is proof that the events envisioned would occur in their life time, and is evidence that the symbols of the apocalypse applied to that period.—1:3; 22:10.

The emphasized imminence of these events in the repetitions of the phrases “the time is at hand,” and “shortly come to pass,” and “come quickly,” is the primary proof that the succession of happenings related to that period, not to the remotest times of the far future centuries.

(22) The code language of the Apocalypse, in the symbolic descriptions of the persecutors and of the persecuting powers, is the *pillar and ground* of all other evidences that the visions referred to the living emperors and existing governments of that period.—1:1.

As the military and the government make use of the code system in the communication of messages to personnel, to be withheld from the public, so the use of code language in Revelation was for the purpose of “showing unto his servants” throughout the empire the ominous message of admonitory warning. The reason for this code system is plain, for if John had named the rulers and their offices it would have brought immediate reprisals against the church. Herein lies another evidence: for if the events of the apocalypse did not refer to that period, but to the future centuries, there would have been no danger involved, and no crisis precipitated, by John’s employment of plain literal language, nor any more purpose for the use of such symbols than in the other epistles of the New Testament.

Our conclusion is that from the prologue to the epilogue the Apocalypse speaks to its own time. In any other concept its pageantry is pretentious and bizarre, and its imagery abnormal and grotesque. Such does not comport with the purposes of divine revelation in the scheme of human redemption.

## III

## SYMBOLLOGY AND TYPOLOGY

As a further preliminary to entering into the analysis of *The Book Of Revelation*, and a commentary on its verses, a specific study of symbols and types, in addition to the previous discussion of visions and theophanies is in order for the symbolic character of Revelation is the culmination of all biblical apocalypics.

(1) The symbolic pattern.

The parallels and comparisons in the visions of the prophets and the apocalypses of John will demonstrate that Revelation is the climax and crown of them all. The similarities between the typology of the former and the symbolics of the latter, establishes a divine pattern of the typical and symbolical form of divine revelation, showing the otherwise unaccountable unity in the books of the Bible. It also constitutes additional evidence that Revelation is not the confused compilation of fragmentary history of future centuries, which the continuous historical pageantry theory demands, but is rather the grand finale in the transcendent design of all revelation, "according to the eternal purpose," to make known "by the church the manifold wisdom of God," in the time of its full establishment.

A grouping of these theophanies to show the unbroken chain of divine revelation in biblical symbology and typology is here arranged:

1. The prophet Isaiah's vision of the throne—Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4.
2. The prophet Ezekiel's vision of the creatures—Ezekiel 10 and Revelation 4.
3. The vision of the valley full of the dry bones—Ezekiel 37 and Revelation 19.
4. The vision of the kingdom that would stand forever—Daniel 2:44 and Revelation 11:15.
5. The vision of the new heaven and the new earth—Isaiah 66 and Revelation 21.

6. The vision of the horses with mingled colors—Zechariah 1 and Revelation 6.

7. The vision of measuring Jerusalem—Zechariah 2 and Revelation 11.

8. The vision of the ruling priest-king on the throne—Zechariah 6 and Revelation 5.

9. The forecast of the siege and fall of Jerusalem—Zechariah 14 and Revelation 14.

10. The vision of the holy city, the new Jerusalem—Zechariah 14 and Revelation 21.

11. The vision of the seven golden candlesticks—Zechariah 4 and Revelation 1.

12. The vision of the living waters flowing from Jerusalem—Zechariah 13-14 and Revelation 21-22.

The foregoing chart of comparisons of the old and the new testament apocalyptic passages reinforce the premises of this treatise that the apostolic visions of John in the *Book Of Revelation* sustain the same relation to the tribulation and victory of the church in the New Testament era of persecution as the prophetic visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel sustained to the captivity and deliverance of Israel in the Old Testament period of their exile.

These impressive parallelisms cannot fail to impress a pious peruser of the divine book with unity and continuity of its contents, from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation; that its prophecy and history are from the same divine hand; and that the events which they foretold and described were all unfolded and fulfilled "according to the eternal purpose" in the establishment and perfection of the divine institution, the church of Christ.

## (2) The symbolic code.

It is virtually a truism to say that definitions of the code words of Revelation are necessary to an understanding of their use. These code words fall into various associations, such as *earth* and *air*; the *land* and the *sea*; the *sun*, the *moon*, the *stars*, and *heaven*. All the colors of the rainbow

are employed, and beasts and birds, and names and numbers. The calamities of war, pestilence and famine, of conquests and victories, are all envisioned—and all these will be defined and applied in the progress of these commentaries. It is sufficient here to list their uses and meanings in their respective categories.

1. The *air* refers to the sphere of life and influence, as “the prince of the power of the air” in Eph. 2:1.

2. The *earth* designates the place of the nations, particularly Palestine, as in chapter 13:11-12, where the earth and the beast of the earth referred to Palestine, in contradistinction from the emperor beast of Rome, from over the sea.

3. The *quaking* of the earth signified the shaking of nations, as in Rev. 16:18, where “the great earthquake” symbolized an upheaval in the nations.

4. The *sea* symbolized society and its state, or condition—the tossed sea meaning a trouble society, and the placid sea a peaceful society.

5. The word *heaven* refers to existing government, authority, and dominion—the context determining this use of the term, as in Rev. 12:1, 8, where “the great wonder in heaven,” and “neither was their place found any more in heaven,” referred to position in earthly government.

6. The *stars* are the designations of the rulers and officials of government, as in Matt. 24:29 and Rev. 6:13, where the falling of the stars applied to the downfall of the officials of government, in connection with the calamitous events during and after the siege and fall of Jerusalem.

7. The term *war* is employed to describe various phases of hostilities and conflicts among the governments and inhabitants of the earth, such as Rev. 12:7, 17, 19:19, and numerous other examples.

In the category of symbolic colors, all of the specific colors are engaged in the imagery of the visions. *White* was the emblem of purity and righteousness, like the Rider

of the white horse in the scene of sixth chapter, the Christ. *Black* was the sign of distress and calamity, as signified by the rider of the black horse. *Red* was the evil omen of war and bloodshed, as symbolized by the red horse. *Pale* presented the aura of death, as is specified for the pale horse and its rider, in chapter 6:8. *Purple* represents the show of pomp and luxury, as in the great harlot woman of chapter 17:4, and of the once great city of Jerusalem in chapter 18:16. *Emerald* was the emblem of divine grace and goodness and patience, as in chapter 4:3.

### (3) The symbolic drama.

In the classification of the *animals* in the visions, the composite beasts, with multiple heads and horns, tails and toes, were the representation of varied characters of the persecutors, and the various characteristics of the persecuting powers, whether Jewish or Roman, or the combined powers of the world of heathenism, both secular and spiritual.

In the symbolic *acts*, there were the riders of the horses, the measurements of spaces, the movements of armies, and the flying of fowls. In the symbolic *numbers*, the numerals of 3, 7, 10, 12, 100 and 1000 are employed. In the symbolic *names*, of cities and of characters, frequent mention is made of Babylon, Sodom, Egypt, Balaam, Jezebel, Nicolaitanes and Antipas, in respective figurative connections.

As the multiple headed and horned beasts symbolized the diverse characters of the persecutors, the various types of *calamities*, *famine* and *pestilence* depicted the diversity of the forms of the persecutions.

The battle word *Armageddon* is a metaphor of conflict between the secular and the spiritual forces, the struggle between the pagan powers and the church, between heathenism and Christianity.

The shift from the *altar* scene of the sixth chapter to the *throne* scene of the twentieth chapter envisions the triumph of the Cause of the Martyrs in the victory of the saints over the powers of persecution; and the *thousand years* was the representation of saints reigning with Christ



in complete victory. There is nothing said in the text or context of the *reign of Christ*, but rather the reigning of the saints *with Christ*, which represents the spiritual state after the victory over the persecutions. The words *reigned* and *reign* in Rev. 20:4-6 denote the same spiritual state as the same words do in Rom. 5:17 and I Cor. 4:8 and II Tim. 2:12, all of which are used in the sense of the spiritual reign with Christ in the sacrifice and service of our fellowship with him.

The word *thousand* is mentioned in Revelation about a score of times, and is a *perfect number*, as elsewhere in the Bible in such references as Deut. 7:9: "Know ye therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." Also in I Chron. 16:15, in a song of praise. David said: "Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations." The use of the figurative term *thousand* in these references can only mean that God's recollection of his word and his covenant is infinite, perfect and complete.

In the sixth chapter of Revelation the souls of the slain (the martyrs) were seen under the altar, which was the scene of seeming defeat in persecution and martyrdom. But in the vision of the twentieth chapter the same souls were removed from beneath the altar and elevated to thrones, which was the scene of victory over their persecutors, and they were said to reign *with Christ a thousand years*. The use of the word here, as elsewhere, is in the sense of that which is perfect and complete—they *lived and reigned with Christ*, in the spiritual state of triumph and victory; *a thousand years*, that is, in *complete* victory in deliverance from the persecutors and the persecutions, which they had overcome. During this period of persecution and distress Satan was represented as running loose in the land, but in the victory scene he was restrained, or bound—so the ebbing and the flowing of the tide of the persecutions were envisioned as the binding and the loosing of Satan, as the analysis of the closing chapters in the commentary section will disclose.

The vision of the *new heaven* and the *new earth* was descriptive of the state of victory and success after the period of persecutions through which they had passed, comparable to Isaiah's description of the deliverance of Israel from exile in Babylon to their land of Judea, as recorded in Isa. 65:15 and 66:22-23. This was called Israel's "new heaven and new earth"; and the scenes of chapters 20 to 22 of Revelation were the like depictions, symbolically narrated, of the deliverance of the church from tribulation into the state of victory and blessing that followed.

The figurative resurrection of these chapters form that counterpart, previously mentioned, of the visions of the deliverance of Israel from captivity, figuratively set forth in Isa. 26:13-19 and Ezek. 37:11-14 as the resurrection of the people of Israel.

The symbol of the spiritual Jerusalem is used by the apostle Paul, in Gal. 4:26, as "the mother of us all," and the metaphor of "the new heavens and the new earth" is used by the apostle Peter, in II Pet. 3:13, as descriptive of our future eternal state of final victory in the heavenly home of the soul.

So the metaphorical phrase, "the new heaven and the new earth," has been figuratively adapted to any state of success and victory, and by no stretch of imagination can the phrase be applied to a future dispensation on earth, with Christ reigning a thousand years in bodily presence among men, according to the literal millennium theory.

The *new Jerusalem* descending from God, pictured as robed in the attire and habiliment of the Bride of Christ, is the portrayal of the church as the new spiritual Jerusalem, in contrast with the old apostate Jerusalem, which had disappeared from the scene. The *marriage supper* of the vision means the continuous feast of fellowship in Christ, which must necessarily be as continuous as baptism, for in every baptism into Christ there is a marriage to Christ performed.

The descriptions of the *holy Jerusalem*, and the *city that lieth foursquare*, were the symbolic narrations of the grandeur of the victorious church, in keeping with the preceding vision of the gloriously arrayed Bride of Christ.

The scene of the *great white throne*, and the casting of the *Dragon* into the lake of fire and brimstone, was the symbolic delineation of the judgment of God against the persecutors and of the divine wrath that descended upon them.

Having completed this cursive preview, attention is now turned to the commentary on the visions and their significance.



# **BOOK OF REVELATION**

## **SECTION TWO**

### **THE VISIONAL PROLOGUE**

**(CHAPTERS ONE TO THREE)**



## CHAPTERS 1 TO 3

“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.

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.

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 first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of 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.

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.

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.

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;

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.

2 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 has 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 Nicolaitanes, 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.

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.

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 Balac 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 Nicolaitanes, 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.

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.

3 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.

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 has kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

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.

12 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 spue 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:

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 annoint 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.”

# THE VISIONAL PROLOGUE

## CHAPTERS 1-3

### I.

#### THE INTRODUCTION

(Chapter 1:1-3)

“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. 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.”

#### (1) The source of the visions.

##### 1. “The revelation of Jesus Christ”—1:1.

It was made known *by* Jesus Christ, that is, it was not concerning Christ himself. The language does not refer to the person of Christ, as the subject of the vision, but to the One by whom it was communicated to John—by Jesus Christ “the faithful witness,” through the agency of his angel.

##### 2. “Which God gave unto him”—1:1.

God, the Father, was himself the source of the vision. This reverence for God was always manifested by Jesus, as he affirmed in all of the gospel records while he was on the earth, that he did not speak of, or from, himself, but from his Father who sent him. (Jno. 12:49) This vision was first a revelation that God sent to his Son, Jesus Christ, who, in the second place, sent it by an angel, in the third place, to John, in the fourth place of the numerical declension. The angel *signified* the vision to John, that is, communicated it to him in the signs directed by Jesus Christ.

(2) The object of the visions.

1. "To show unto his servants"—1:1.

It was on the principle that to be forewarned was to be forearmed. So the things *signified*, or symbolized—set forth in signs— were explained to the members of the churches for their needful information concerning the immediate events which pertained to the persons and churches addressed, and which would be fulfilled in the period of their own lives and experiences; else the language addressed to them served no purpose to the people for whom "God gave it," and to whom it was sent.

2. "Things which must shortly come to pass"—1:1.

Reference to *things* indicated a definite form of events then shaping, and the word *must* is not a speculative or conjectural term; it was factual, and the word *shortly* denoted immediacy. These events applied to them, not to centuries after their time, and even yet to come. The object of the entire revelation was to inform and forewarn, to comfort and encourage the church in the time of this vision—the apostolic age, the period of the churches addressed.

(3) The method of the delivery and communication.

1. "And he sent and signified it by an angel"—1:1.

The revelation was *sent* by an angel—that is, it was delivered by a special messenger. And it was *signified*, indicating how it was communicated; that it was not merely made known, but was transmitted in code by signs and symbols. It was a special message, delivered by special messengers, in the special medium of code language. It was thus dispatched *unto his servant John*.

2. "Unto his servant John"—1:1.

There is a difference in the meanings of the words *show* and *signify*. Jesus Christ *signified* the vision unto John to *show* unto his servants. That is, it was revealed to John in code for explanation to the churches, which could, of

course, have been accomplished by the spiritually gifted teachers of that period in each church. The meaning is that as a message, it was special and not general; it was for the churches, and not for the public. As an example, the Comforter (Jno. 14:16 and 13:13) was a special promise to the apostles alone, and not to all of the disciples, nor for the world in general—only the apostles. So it was with the apocalypse; it was a message for the early churches, not for the Jewish world nor the Roman public—and that is why it was written in code instead of the use of literal language, as in all of the other epistles.

(4) The witness of the visions.

1. "Who bare record of the word of God"—1:2.

The *word of God*, to which John was to be the witness, was the message of the revelation itself, the word *which God gave* unto Jesus Christ (verse 1) at this time and in this apocalypse, not the word of God which had already been preached by the other apostles or that which was in the general epistles. This was the word of God in the special sense, belonging to the special message, for the special time. These were the special things which Jesus Christ *signified* to John, which did not belong to the revelation of the gospel contained in the other epistles. It was an apocalyptic revelation to the churches that were on the threshold of their peril—in that period called *the hour of trial*.

2. "And of the testimony of Jesus Christ"—1:2.

As previously intimated, this is a specific reference to the testimony of Christ to John, not John's testimony of or concerning Christ. It was the testimony of this apocalypse, as stated in the first line of the first verse, *the testimony of Jesus Christ*.

3. "Even of all things that he saw"—1:2.

Thus it is that both *the word of God* and the *testimony of Jesus Christ* refer to the things that John saw, of which John *bare record*, not the past witness of the word which

all the other apostles had made, nor the testimony of Christ in the sense of the gospel which they had preached. It was the word of God and the testimony of this apocalypse only of the things to which John was bearing witness and of which he was making a record.

(5) The admonitions of the visions.

1. "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear—1:3.

This is, first, a reference to the person whose task it was to explain the visions, designated as *he that readeth*; and second, to the auditors assembled to receive it, as *they that hear*. As previously mentioned, there were specially endowed teachers, spiritually gifted men, in all of the churches (I Cor. 12), who could read and decode the revelation that was signified. The language of verse 3 indicates the need of the explanatory reading.

2. "The words of this prophecy"—1:3.

These words were prophetic in the sense of being visional. In this use of the word prophecy, it was apocalyptic only of things already beginning to occur. It was not the foretelling of far future events not connected with the experiences of *his servants* to whom and for whom the apocalypse was delivered.

3. "And keep those things which are written therein"—1:3.

The manifest meaning of this phrase is that *his servants* should remember the signified portents, and the monitory exhortations of the visions, for they would come within the experiences of their own time.

4. "For the time is at hand"—1:3.

There can be no reason to assign any other meaning to this phrase *at hand* than that which it had in the announcement of John the Baptist that the kingdom of heaven was *at hand* (Matt. 3:2), or of Jesus that the kingdom of God was *at hand* (Mark 1:14-15). The language and the



context of it can mean only one thing—that these events were imminent. The sole reason for the admonition to *read* and *hear* and *keep* the things signified is stated in the clause of this verse: *for the time is at hand*. If the things *written therein* pertained to the remote future rather than to the immediate future, there was no application for such a warning.

## II

THE SALUTATORY INTERMISSION  
(Chapter 1:4-8)

“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 first begotten 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.”

## (1) The salutation of John to the churches.

As John was known to them all, familiar by name and person, it was not necessary to distinguish himself from others by any descriptive titles or designations, such as an *apostle* of Christ. The use of the word *apostle* as introductory to the epistles of Paul had a specific reason, to affirm his apostolic credentials which Judaizers had attempted to discredit. No such circumstances existed with John, and he simply said *John* to the churches. If the author of Revelation had been another John than the apostle, some descriptive appellation would have been required for identification.

## (2) To the seven churches.

The claim that *seven* dispensations are indicated by *seven* letters to *seven* churches, covering all Christian centuries, is reversed by the factual character of the names and the events corresponding in date to the period of the apocalypse. Though addressed to the seven churches in the Asian provinces of Mysia, Lydia, Caria and Phrygia, its contents would apply to all the early churches, as did the teaching in the apostolic epistles.

The Asia of these churches is generally considered to be where John went after the martyrdom of his brother James (Acts 12:2-3), which was said to be "pleasing to the Jews," and which connects with the Jewish persecutions belonging to the apocalypses of Revelation, and with John's association with the seven churches of this Asian region. The geographical designation of the text, *in Asia*, does not include the continent of Asia, nor the whole of Asia Minor, but rather a small Roman province in the west coastal part of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital, and which included the lesser provinces named. A look at the map will settle this point in the minds of the reader who is geographically interested.

## (3) From the eternal God and the living Christ.

1. "From him which is, and which was, and which is to come"—1:4.

This sublime statement refers to God, and the description *which is, and which was* affirms his eternal Being; and *which is to come* has reference to his predicted judgments and events.

2. "And from the seven spirits which are before his throne"—1:4.

The *seven spirits* are a designation of the spirit of each of the seven churches, having already been described as *seven golden candlesticks*, and later referred to (chapter 4:5) as *seven lamps before his throne*. Thus the *seven spirits before his throne* are identical with the *seven lamps before his throne*. It is the continuation of the apocalyptic

aspect of the seven-branched lamps (or candlesticks) which represented the seven churches, and being *before his throne* signified a unison with God and Christ in these salutations.

3. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness"—1:5.

It was Jesus Christ who had borne witness to the truth of his Sonship before Pontius Pilate, as mentioned in I Tim. 6:13. And he was associated with God in the salutations to his servants who were on the brink of that hour of trial, which would bring death to them, for the same confession before men that Jesus had made before Pilate.

4. "The first begotten of the dead"—1:5.

The language here does not affirm that Jesus was the first person to be *raised* from the dead, for several names can be mentioned who were miraculously raised up out of their graves, by the prophets of the Old Testament, and by Jesus and Peter in the New Testament, all of which were for the purposes of divine demonstration. They were not resurrected to die no more, but returned to corruption—therefore they were not *begotten of the dead*. To him alone, who conquered death by a resurrection to die no more, belongs the title, *the first begotten of the dead*.

5. "The prince of the kings of the earth"—1:5.

The four appellations together accentuate first, *who* he was, and second, *what* he was, from whom this message came.

6. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood"—1:5.

The release from sins as the result of the shedding of his *own* blood, represented here as the element in which the sins of man are washed away, is the heart of the remedial plan.

7. "And hath made us kings and priests"—1:6.

The God unto whom all members of the church are priests is here affirmed to be his Father, thus ascribing

deity to Jesus Christ. The offices of royalty and priesthood are united in the members of the churches, as typified in Ex. 19:6, and finds its spiritual fulfillment in I Pet. 2:9. The allusions to the "kingdom of priests," in the Exodus passage, was to emphasize that Christ has made *us* new kings and priests in contrast with what once was but is no more. The church is the kingdom of Christ, and all the members are priests unto God—hence, the church is a kingdom of priests. The Syriac New Testament reads: "And hath made us a priestly kingdom."

#### 8. "Unto God and his Father"—1:6.

The eternal dominion of God is here pronounced. Although it is Christ who is King, and has made us into a new kingdom and a new priesthood, it was so done *unto God and his Father*. This was true of the old Israel whose kingdom, though ruled by appointed heads, was *unto God*; and this universal dominion of God has existed from the beginning as an eternal truth.

#### 9. "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."—1:6.

The glory and the dominion of God is never ending. He had unlimited dominion in all things of the past; he holds dominion over all things of the present; and he will exercise dominion over all events of the future. The dispensations changed from one age to another, from the old to the new, but the dominion of God remains the same. The things of men and of angels, and of the Son himself, are and ever shall be subservient to God, the Supreme Being and Absolute Ruler of the universe.

### (4) The ominous announcement.

#### 1. "Behold he cometh with the clouds"—1:7.

The reference here is not to the second advent, or return of Christ, but to the coming events about to be delineated, as in the Lord's reply to Caiaphas, the high priest in Matt. 26:64: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on

the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." This high priest would live to see the event here foretold, the fulfillment of which occurred in the figurative coming of Christ in the destruction of Jerusalem, as previously foretold in Matthew 24, and centuries before by the prophet Zechariah in chapter 14. The prophet referred to the destruction of Jerusalem as "the day of the Lord," and in Matthew 24 Jesus designated it as his coming. And Jesus told Caiaphas that he would live to witness it. The words *behold he cometh* are an announcement of warning, a call to expectancy, an alert to the impending developments.

The added expression *with the clouds* are not to be literally taken for a material display of his bodily presence. In the description of God's judgment on Egypt, in Isa. 19:6, the prophet said: "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt." Also, in Ezek. 38:16, the prophet said that the latter days God would come up against Israel "as a cloud to cover the land." And in Matt. 24:30, Jesus describes the events in the destruction of Jerusalem as "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This is precisely what Jesus told Pilate that he should see, and it is the meaning of Rev. 1:7, pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. "And every eye shall see him"—1:7.

Both the impact and the import of the occurring events would be of universal knowledge. The siege and fall of Jerusalem would be known to the entire population of the Roman empire both Jewish and pagan.

3. "And they that pierced him"—1:7.

The act and the fact here declared refer not merely to the Romans who wielded and thrust the sword into the Lord's body on the cross, but also to the Jews who, through the officials of their nation, had performed the deed. The truth of this statement is affirmed by the officials of the Jews themselves in Matt. 27:25, and it is confirmed by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:23.

4. "And all the kindreds (tribes) of the earth shall wail because of him"—1:7.

The families of the Jews all over the Roman world are here mentioned. The Gentiles were never referred to as *tribes*; the tribes belonged to the Jews, who were dispersed into every part of the earth. Yet the events foretold of what would happen to their city and their nation, in Jerusalem and Judea, would become known wherever they were scattered, and all the Jews in every part of the earth would *wail* over this calamity. They would all *mourn* over the ruin of their city Jerusalem, and for the destruction of their system of Judaism, and for the overthrow of their theocracy in the demolition of their temple, and for the termination of their Jewish state—their national distinction and existence. And they would *wail* (or *mourn*) *because of him*, for it was in fulfillment of the fearful woes that he had pronounced against Jerusalem and which were figuratively ascribed to his coming.

This *piercing* and *mourning* were the subjects of the prophecy of Zech. 12:9-11; 14:1, described as "the day of the Lord." The quotation of the first reference is made in Jno. 19:37. These scriptural applications show that the fulfillment of the *coming with the clouds* in Rev. 1:7 was accomplished in the events of the fall of Jerusalem. These fulfilling events, at and after the destruction of Jerusalem, have unmistakable bearing on the contents of Revelation, and the period to which it belongs.

5. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending"—1:8.

These are the first and the last letters in the Greek alphabet, and they correspond to the *Yea* and *Amen* of the Hebrew equivalent. The one in verse 7, and the other in verse 8, appear to be an affirmation and ratification of the things about to be signified as being the irrevocable testimony of Jesus Christ.

## III

## THE PREFATORY VISION

(Chapter 1:9-18)

“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. 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. 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; 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 seven churches.”

## (1) The place of the vision.

The location of the vision was “in the isle that is called Patmos.” This island has been described as a small

rocky and rugged region off the barren coast of Asia Minor, approximately twenty-five miles from the mainland in the Aegean sea—a gulf of the Great Sea (the Mediterranean), which formed the coastal provinces of Mysia, Lydia, Phrygia and Caria, and in which were situated all the *seven churches of Asia*, mentioned in the vision.

Tradition claims that John was banished by the Roman government and exiled on Patmos. There is no conclusive scriptural evidence nor verified factual history to sustain this traditional claim, and it stands somewhat on the same basis as the Petrine tradition that the apostle Peter once resided in Rome. It is not said in the text, nor necessarily implied in the contents of Revelation, that John was a prisoner on Patmos. If John was a prisoner on Patmos, as Paul was a prisoner in Rome, it is singularly strange, if not unaccountable, that no mention was made of it, and no reference was made to it, by himself or in any other New Testament epistle.

## (2) The purpose of the vision.

“For the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ”—1:9.

The English preposition *for* in this passage is *dia*, which Professor Terry states that, by its established usage with the accusative, means *for the sake of* the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It gives the ground or the reason for John’s presence on Patmos: that the reason for being there was no other than to receive the revelation, that is, for the vision itself—for “the testimony of Jesus Christ” *and* “of all things that he saw,” and not because of banishment and exile. The coupling of the testimony with the vision in verse 2, supports the view that he was there to receive the *things that he saw*, and that these things were themselves *the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ*, for which he was there.

A further evidence of this concept in John’s own statement, in chapter 10:11, of his intention to leave Patmos for an active itinerary among the people of many nations, to carry to them in personal evangelism the testimony of



this apocalypse. If John had been prisoner in exile, no such liberty existed on which to base such an announcement, for he was imprisoned on Patmos, and his *status* would have been no different from Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

Further comparisons in the context will support the *purpose*, not the *consequence*, of the determinative expression *for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ*.

It is worthy of notation here that the similar expressions "for the word of God" and "for the witness of Jesus," in Rev. 6:9 and 20:4, are in another context and carry another connotation, therefore do not warrant the same construction as in Rev. 1:2 and 1:9. In one the testimony was being received; in the other it was being upheld.

### (3) The companionship of suffering and citizenship.

1. "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation"—1:9.

The common ground of fellowship between John and the members of the Asian churches was not his apostleship. It was the brotherhood relation and the mutual participation in the sufferings existing and anticipated. He was speaking not of the incident of his presence on Patmos, or of imprisonment there, but rather to the threat of the gathering and darkening clouds of persecution, such as mentioned in the letters to Smyrna, Thyatira and Philadelphia; particularly as related to its then present and incipient stage; and as in Heb. 10:31-39, the portent of the things to come.

2. "And in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" 1:9.

The preposition *in* with the conjunction *and*—that is, the phrase in tribulation *and* the kingdom *and* the patience of Jesus Christ—joins the three together as existing and present. It follows that if John was not in the kingdom then, and if we are not in the kingdom now—then John was not in Jesus Christ then, and we are not in Jesus

Christ now. But the apostle, in Col. 1:13-14, declares that all the Colossians who were delivered from darkness had thereby been translated into the kingdom when they received redemption in Christ.

### 3. "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day"—1:10.

The claim that John was *in the spirit* means that he was in visional rapture, not in the Holy Spirit, but in the state described of Paul in II Cor. 12, and of Peter in Acts 10. As though out of the body, John was in a state in which the external objects and material surroundings were as though they did not exist—he had for the time passed out of the physical world into the spiritual state. This was not the effect of any natural cause, but rather the result of the interposition of supernatural power.

The words *visions* and *dreams* are not synonymous, and their meanings are not identical, though sometimes they are used indiscriminately in the Scriptures, as in Gen. 46:2; Num. 12:6; Job 20:8; and Dan. 2:28. In the vision, the subject may be awake, as in II Kings 6:17; Acts 23:11; 27:23—in a state of supernatural ecstasy. But in the dreams through which God revealed his purposes and his will, and in the divine purpose, to him was also imparted the powers of interpretation.

The examples of such dreams were numerous, as in Gen. 20:3-6; 28:12-14; I Sam. 28:6; Dan. 2:1-45; and Joel 2:28. This power to interpret was, of course, supernatural and, therefore, the dreams and visions belonged only to the supernatural prophetic and apostolic ages and ceased with them.

Since the complete revelation of God's will for the redemption of man and the edification of his church has been delivered, and its inspired documents committed to the apostolic records of the New Testament, there can be no need or reason for their existence, and no confidence can be held in the claims and pretensions of individuals and cults presuming to employ them, and such presumption can only be labelled as false and impious.

The verse under consideration states that John was *in the spirit on the Lord's day*. The preposition *on* is the

same in the Greek as *in*, and the context must determine the distinction. The use of it here means *in the midst of* the Lord's day. It is not a reference to the first day of the week, but to the day in which the Lord accomplished these events, as used in Isa. 13:9 in which Isaiah described the destruction of ancient Babylon as the day of the Lord; and in Zech. 14:1 where Zechariah referred to the destruction of Jerusalem as the day of the Lord. The phrase meant the day of events connected with the judgments of the Lord. II Tim. 1:18 referred to *the day* of God's mercy, meaning the time in which his mercy is extended to men. In this sense the phrase *in the Lord's day* is used in Rev. 1:10; it means in day of the rapture into which the Lord had placed John—that he had been transported into the midst of the scenes of the vision as though he was, himself, in the day of their happening.

#### (4) The voice of the Son of man.

##### 1. "And heard behind me a great voice"—1:10.

This part of the scene was not occult, but auditory. John *heard* this voice, and it came from behind him, from a point where he was not looking. The great voice was "as a trumpet"—a signal, as if to announce the approach of a solemn epiphany, a divine presence.

##### 2. "What thou seest, write in a book"—1:11.

The voice appointed John to be only the amanuensis of Jesus Christ—only the scribe of documents that were not his own; the mere chronicler of events of a supernatural apocalypse.

##### 3. "And send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia"—1:11.

This oracular command of the *Addresser* in this scene specified the seven churches as the *addressees*, and named them. Again, here is the indication of the period and date of the visions. If the seven churches were figurative, as some authors claim, why this factual designation of the actual names and locations of figurative churches. The

argument for the early date of Revelation, as previously shown, is in the historical fact that there were only the seven churches in these western Asian provinces before the destruction of Jerusalem, but after that event the churches became numerous by the diffusion of Christianity over the empire, the opportunity for which was greatly enhanced by the removal of Judaism, its greatest foe, from the path of the church. It has been more than once mentioned that such eminent scholars as Schaff, Terry and MacDonald (and others) verify the historical fact that after the Great Earthquake (before the destruction of Jerusalem) the churches at Colosse and Hierapolis did not again maintain a separate existence, but consolidated with the nearby Laodicean church. Concluding his remarks on this point in *The Life And Writings Of John*, page 154, MacDonald says: "There appear to have been but seven churches in Asia . . . when the book was written. It is dedicated to these seven alone by the careful mention of them one by one by name, as if there were no others. . . . The expression 'the seven churches' seems to imply that this constituted the whole number, and hence affords one of the most striking incidental proofs in favor of an early date. . . . Those who contend for the later date, when there must have been a greater number of churches than seven in the region designated by the apostle fail to give any sufficient reason for his mentioning no more. That they mystically or symbolically represented others is surely not such a reason." Again, Doctor Tilloch, in his work entitled *Dissertations*, says "There were but seven churches in Asia when the Revelation was written."

The historical evidences from these, and many others, cannot be spurned or waived aside with a theoretical assertion. It is weighty evidence that the visions of Revelation were composed before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The history of these cities and churches supports John's specific statement. It is a vital point in the divergence of view on the chronology of Revelation. It involves the claim that the church at Colosse is an example of another Asian church than the seven mentioned, but as previously proven by historical data, Colosse was destroyed by the earthquake

in the reign of Nero, and was not thereafter identified by that name, but merged with the Laodiceans, as was true of other cities and churches in the region. In his own one-volume work titled *A Dictionary Of The Bible*, Philip Schaff, commenting on Laodicea, makes the following statement: "When, in the middle of the first century of our era, an earthquake destroyed Colosse, Hierapolis and Laodicea, the latter was rebuilt by its own inhabitants without any aid from the Roman senate." The casual reader cannot fail to observe the significance of the statement that "the latter (Laodicea) was rebuilt," which, mentioned in direct connection with Colosse and Hierapolis, can only mean that these two were not rebuilt. Laodicea was rebuilt, but Colosse and Hierapolis were not. This accounts for the disbanding of the two churches as separate congregations, and refutes the claim that there were more than the seven churches in the period when the Apocalypse was composed.

If the facts of history mean anything at all, there is firm proof here for the pre-Destruction of Jerusalem date for John's Patmos apocalypse.

(5) The Son of man in the midst.

1. "In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man"—1:12-13.

When John turned to *see the voice*, he saw one who had the appearance of Jesus. From his own memory John knew Jesus. He could recognize the countenance of the Lord and his personal appearance by his constant association with him in the days of his flesh. And he had seen him in majesty, glory and power in his ascension. Now he beheld in the vision One who was *like* him—he had known his incarnate person; he saw him in ascended glory; he knew his coronated majesty; he knew his kingly power—and he recognized the Son of man!

2. "He was clothed with a garment."—1:13.

The royal garment was in keeping with appropriate royalty, a royal garment which was indicative of monarchical dignity.

3. "And girt with a golden girdle"—1:13.

It represented the source and sway of the truth, as the girdle of truth suggests in Eph. 6:14.

4. "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow"—1:14.

These figures symbolized his sinless purity and his sublime majesty, as employed in Isa. 1:18: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

5. "And his eyes were as a flame of fire"—1:14.

The same symbols are used in the prophetic apocalypses to designate divine omniscience, that He is the penetrator and the discernor of all things.

6. "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned it in a furnace"—1:15.

The reference here is to the method of refining metals and minerals in a crucible, and it is the emblem of untarnished and unmingled truth of which Jesus Christ is the source and the administrator.

7. "And his voice as the sound of many waters"—1:15.

In this metaphor John saw Jesus as the combination of unison and rhythm in its perfect flow, signifying the accord and harmony of divine utterance, set to the melody of divine love and grace and blessing.

8. "And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword"—1:16.

The same theophany is presented in the flaming sword of Eden. It stood for divine justice, and here it means that Jesus Christ was, and is now, the executor of righteous judgment and justice.

9. "And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength"—1:16.

The sun of the solar system is the light of the world. As the monarch of the universe it rules the solar system as

the earth and all planets revolve around it. So was the Son of man in this high point in the vision. In all his grandeur, as in the last prophetic glimpse of Malachi, he was the *sun of righteousness*, with all the spiritual benefits to mankind that the sun can bestow in its rays upon the earth.

10. "I am alive for evermore . . . and have the keys of hell (hades) and death"—1:17-18.

This is the awe-inspiring declaration that by his own death of the cross, he became Lord of Death, and of the hadean world, because its gates could not prevail against him. He is therefore the Lord of "both the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:9)—by his death and resurrection, of which his appearance to John was the visible proof.

#### IV

### THE INTERPRETATION OF THE MYSTERY (Chapter 1:19-20.)

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

(1) The import of the mystery.

1. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" 1:19.

Underlining the word *things*, used three times in this verse, it gives emphasis, first, to the past—*the things thou hast seen*; and second, to the present—*the things which are*; and third, to the future—*the things which shall be hereafter*. But in each case it has reference to the revealed things of Revelation itself, not to the known events of the past, or present. The things *seen* were not optical or per-

ceptive, but revealed, they were seen by Revelation. The things which *are*, were not the knowledge of present things, but a reference to that part of the vision, or the revelation, which involved the present. The things which should be *thereafter* were declared to be immediate—shortly to occur. It would not require an apocalypse to reveal the past events, but it was imperative that the churches should know the present, and those things which were immediately at hand.

2. “The mystery of the seven stars . . . and the seven golden candlesticks”—1:20.

The use of the word *mystery* in Revelation comports with the meaning of the word as used elsewhere in the New Testament—that is, the spiritual truths not discoverable by human reason; understandable, but hidden from human knowledge until revealed. The word has the connotation of “secret doctrine,” hence, prior to revelation it was a hidden thing; but when revealed, it was brought within human intelligence and understanding.

The gospel mystery imbedded in the old dispensation, as in Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3-9; and Col. 1:26, was hidden beneath the types and sacrifices of the law and the prophecies and promises, which were radiant with hope and joy to a guilty world, but were rather concealed than revealed, because of the metaphorical costume and figurative style they could not be discerned, and had to await revelation.

The word *mystery* did not mean *mysterious*. It meant that which could not be known until it was made known, or revealed, and in the references cited, it meant the gospel plan of salvation. The doctrine of the New Testament is in this sense called a mystery—“the mystery of the gospel,” as in Rom. 11:25; 16:25; I Cor. 15:51; I Tim. 3:9; Eph. 3:9. The truths thus requiring revelation and elucidation are classed as *mysteries*, as numerous other passages could be used to exemplify. But let it be emphasized, that in all of these examples the basic meaning inherent in the word *mystery* is that which cannot be known by the human mind, until by superhuman source it is made known to it.



## (2) The explanation of the mystery.

The *seven golden candlesticks* denoted, that as organized bodies, a congregation receives light and reflects it. It is a significant illustration of the functions and the ministries of the local churches. The emblem of gold underscored the evaluation Jesus Christ makes of his church, and the estimate he has placed upon it. The *seven stars* were representative of position, such as Christ at the right hand of God, indicating that there is something in the symbol that has this representative place *in the right hand of Christ*. The figure calls for pause and reflection, by all who hold position in the church, lest we should become *falling* stars!

The *angels of the churches* are not to be taken as single representatives of the respective congregations, but rather the individual spirit of each church. It is the same in meaning as the description elsewhere of "the seven spirits before his throne." It is a symbolic angel, and it refers to the spirit of the church itself.

When Paul commanded the Corinthian church to exclude the incestuous person from their congregation, he gave the reason: "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." It seems the apostle's reference to *the spirit* applied to the Corinthian church—that it might be saved from corruption, and thus to receive approval in standing before him. It is well to consider the *spirit* that is manifested in a congregation, and that motivates and controls all of its worship and service.

The connotation of the word *angel* may signify various ministries of physical and spiritual beings, both earthly and heavenly. It is used in Matt. 24:31 in reference to the emissaries of the gospel; and in Heb. 1:14 it refers to immaterial and spiritual but intellectual beings whom God employs to execute the orders of divine providence, as also employed in Rev. 1:1 and 22:8. The apostle Paul applied the word, in I Cor. 11:8-10, to the venerable men in the Corinthian church; and the angels (spirits) of little children are said by Jesus, in Matt. 18:10, to behold the face of the Father in heaven. In Jude 6 it is used as an appellation for the early representatives of the race of man in an unnamed

period, who forfeited their high estates by apostasy, and were condemned to darkness and judgment, and in Matt. 25:41, and II Cor. 11:14-15, it is used to describe the devil and his demons. But in Rev. 20:1 the word applies to Jesus Christ himself.

This is rather a wide classification of the word *angel*, but it is used in all of these senses. In the vision of the first chapter of Revelation it seems evident that the word refers to the spirit of each church.

The *stars* in the vision are its members, every member—all members in the body of Christ, of the true spirit, are *stars* in His hand. There is no teaching that exalts one class in the church to any position above all the others, as all the members of Christ stand in equal relation to Him. For one to be exalted above another would “not be so among you,” Jesus said to his disciples, in Matt. 20:26.

As each of the seven churches was individual in character and conduct, they were so in spirit also, and the letters of Jesus to these seven churches were addressed to the angel or spirit of each congregation respectively. The word *angel*, therefore, does not designate a representative person, but symbolically the representative spirit of each church—the *spirit of the church*.

### (3) The central figure.

Jesus Christ was Himself the abiding presence in the churches, directing their work, walking and dwelling in their midst, as the centrifugal and the centripetal spiritual force in each congregation. He was holding the stars in his hand; he was walking among the candlesticks; he was the guiding presence, the moving energy, the inspiring influence, the infinite indweller in every faithful church—and that is true of every true and faithful church of Christ today.

The threefold description of the church was as *gold* in purity and worth—a *golden* candlestick; and as *stars* of glory in his possession, shining in his hand; and He Himself in the midst, as the sun around which the spiritual planets revolve.

## V

THE SEVEN MESSAGES  
(Chapters 2-3)

These are the only documents of Christ. They were directed to churches facing a crisis, in the period of that crisis, which fact, together with the contents of the letters, show the period of history to which the *Book Of Revelation* belongs. The assignment of events to the wrong period of history is anachronistic; and the theory that switches the events of Revelation to the future is the greatest anachronism of all time.

The messages of Christ to the seven churches contain unmistakable indications that Revelation is the symbolic history of the struggle and triumph of the early church in conflict with the Jewish and pagan persecuting powers, written in signs and symbols which were fulfilled in the experiences of the churches of that era.

(1) The letter to the church at Ephesus—2:1-7.

“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 Nicolaitanes, 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.”

1. “He that holdeth the seven stars . . . who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks”—2:1.

The text says, these things *saith he*, not John, not the Holy Spirit, not God, but Christ Himself, the Head of the church, to whom was given all authority, and who, as Paul wrote to the same Ephesian church, was made “the head over all things to the church.”

2. “I know thy works”—2:2.

The *works* here mentioned were not described as either good or bad, but simply works, and it rather refers to the divine omniscience of Christ than to the character of the works mentioned; that nothing escapes his eye or his attention—he *knows* the works of every church of his own, of which he is the head.

3. “Thy labor and thy patience”—2:2.

These words set forth the active and the passive sides to the relationship between the church and its divine head. The use of the word *works* would indicate that which is outward; but *labor* is a deeper word, it is underlying, a working at the price of toil. And patience denotes the inward grace of faithful continuance and endurance. Hence, the active and the passive elements in the life a church.

4. “Thou canst not bear them that are evil: and thou has tried them”—2:2.

This is a retrospective reference to a crisis in the Ephesian church, to an experience of the congregation somewhere in the past. The evil men were detected, convicted and expelled.

5. “Which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars”—2:2.

The teaching of these pretenders was found to be false when tried, as John had exhorted the members of the church to do in respect to the claims of strolling teachers. It is good advice to follow even today. The imposters were tried by what Paul and John, the inspired apostles, had taught the Ephesian church in their own labors among them. It connects with Paul’s own charge to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29, warning them against the “wolves

that would enter in" among them. What Paul said there that would occur, Jesus said here that it had occurred. It is also retrospective of the reason why Paul left Timothy in Ephesus, as mentioned in I Tim. 1:3: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine."

Here is the evidence of the necessary inference that the other apostles were living at the time John composed Revelation, as has been previously mentioned, for on no other supposition could such a claim by these imposters have even appeared plausible. Doubtless the men who made this claim, like most promoters of religious cults, appeared as wise and venerable persons in outward mien and manner; and they carried weight and influence enough to set up such a claim, and to make it so effective as to precipitate a crisis of such proportions that required the action of a trial for their conviction and expulsion. It was not a mere passing incident, but of sufficient importance that it rated the mention in this message of Christ to this church. This reference has a signal place in the cumulative contents of book bearing out the claim of its early date.

6. "Hast borne, hast patience, hast labored . . . hast not fainted"—2:3.

Here is the sphere of tolerance, what to bear and what not to bear. Infirmities and weaknesses can be shared with tolerance, but never to the point of condoning false doctrine, or of upholding false teachers. Of that class Paul said, in Gal. 2:5: "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

In verse 6, they were commended for hating something; some graces had decayed, as in verses 5 and 6, but the hatred of evil had remained, and was extolled.

7. "Remember . . . and repent, and do the first works"—2:5.

This divine injunction goaded the memory in reference to the things of the past; it commanded the will with respect

to the present determination; and it exhorted obedience in the restitution of the *first works*—not in quantity, but in quality. It meant to do the first works *in the spirit* of first love.

8. “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate”—2:6.

The claim that this designation of a sect or a party derived its name from Nicolas, of Acts 6:5, rests on assertion. There is no historical or factual evidence of it. It is more consistent with the code language of Revelation to regard the term *Nicolaitanes* as a symbolic expression, along with the use of the word *Balaam*. The two words actually are similar in meaning, one meant a “victor of the people” and the other a “devourer of the people.” These meanings of the two words significantly unite the two symbols as signs of the religious seductions of the Libertine party in the Ephesian church.

9. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches”—2:7.

*Let him hear:* As the eye is the organ of light to lighten the body (Matthew 5), the ear is the organ of spiritual discernment.

*What the Spirit saith:* The Spirit is here identified with Christ, since the phrase *these things saith he* represents Christ as the speaker.

*To the churches:* What Jesus Christ said to each of the seven churches, he said in substance to all of the churches, and to every church of his own thereafter and now.

10. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life”—2:7.

*To him that overcometh:* This condition attached to the promise that followed was a specific reference to the impending persecutions, thus adding evidence that the book belongs to the period of their own experiences; they were expected to be the overcomers of these persecutions and the conquerors of the persecutors.

*To eat of the tree of life:* The expression *give to eat*, had reference to distribution and reward, and it meant that the promise was as sure as the One who gave it was true. The phrase *to eat* meant to participate in the life that is the fruit of the tree of life. The *tree* of life is an allusion to the tree that disappeared in Eden, but did not perish; it is now *in the paradise of God*, instead of the paradise of man where it once was enjoyed by the first man and his mate; it consists, in this symbolic presentation, in the reward given to the overcomers of the persecutions, which comes only from above—from God.

The warnings to the Ephesian church surround the two elements—the false apostles and the Nicolaitanes. The first formed a parallel with the warning of Christ in Matthew 24 concerning the false prophets that should arise to disturb the disciples after the establishment of the church and before and during the siege of Jerusalem; and the latter was parallel to the warnings of Paul against the parties of Judaism that would develop within the churches.

(2) The letter to the church at Smyrna—2:8-11.

“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.”

1. “These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive”—2:8.

This sublime language repeats the eternity of the One who addresses this church, whom death could not vanquish, and it was intended for the encouragement of the Smyrna

members to follow him even *unto death*, or martyrdom, with no fear of the consequences.

2. "The blasphemy of the Jews"—2:9.

This phraseology is not addressed to the true Jews, but to the pseudo-Jews, and had regard to the Jewish persecutions, which the calumnious and bitter opposition of the fanatical Jews waged against their own kinsmen who had accepted Christ. Again, it finds parallel in the Jewish persecutions foretold by the Lord in Matthew 24.

3. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days"—2:10.

This cannot mean a literal ten days, but rather to the ten persecutors, the number of which is historically factual. As there were five fallen imperial rulers before Nero—from Nero to Diocletian there were ten persecuting emperors. This era of persecution reached its crescendo in Diocletian's *reign of terror*, in which he vowed to obliterate the name Christian from the Roman empire.

The indications are too plain for doubt that this *ten days tribulation* had immediate reference to the era or epoch of the ten persecuting emperors. Their succession is symbolized in Rev. 17:8-11, which describe the ebbing and the flowing of the tide of persecution, in the expressions *was*, *is not* and *yet is*. In the verses 10 and 11 the succession of these emperors is so plainly indicated that the mention of them by name could not have been plainer to the members of the churches to whom this code language was addressed. The history of these apocalyptic facts is verified in *Gibbon's History Of The Fall And Decline Of The Roman Empire*.

4. "Be thou faithful unto death"—2:10.

The death of this admonition predicted the martyrdom of some of their number. It does not refer to ordinary death as related to the usual span of life, not merely until one dies; it was a warning to them with specific reference to martyrdom. It was an exhortation to be faithful *even unto martyrdom*, a consequence of loyalty to Christ in the persecutions, and apocalyptic forecast fulfilled in the experiences



of these churches in their own time, the trials of the immediate conflict, not prophecies of remote centuries.

5. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt with the second death"—2:11.

This passage finds its apocalyptic fulfillment within the vision itself, in chapter 20:6, in the description of the culmination of all of the imagery of these scenes with the victory of the saints in the conflicts that come to end. The first law of the higher mathematics is that "things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." This law applied to the comparison between these two passages, chapter 2:11 and chapter 20:6, yields the following conclusion: 1. Overcoming the persecutions equaled exemption from the second death; 2. Part in the first resurrection equaled exemption from the second death; 3. These two things being equal to the same thing were equal to each other. Therefore, the result of *overcoming the persecutions* was pictured as *the first resurrection* of the apocalypse, and was prerequisite to the living and the reigning with Christ in the triumphant state of victory that is described.

(3) The letter to the church at Pergamos.—2:12-17.

"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 Balac 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 Nicolaitanes, 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."

1. "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges"—2:12.

The sword is an instrument of war, hence Christ threatened to wage war against the church in Pergamos, because of the evils within it, with the weapon designated "the sword of my mouth." A sword of the *mouth* would necessarily be the spoken word, and it meant the employment of the two-edged sword of his word (Heb. 4:12), as a dual condemnation of the outside espionage of Satan's seat in Pergamos, and the inside sabotage of Balaam's doctrine within the church itself—the combined infiltration of pagan secular practices on one hand, and the Nicolaitane spiritual contaminations of erroneous doctrines on the other hand.

2. "Where Satan's seat is"—2:13.

The stronghold of Satan consisted in the pagan and Jewish oppositions, which were combined in Pergamos into deadly threats against the church. The Pergamos church had been weakened by the heathen surroundings of Mysia, known for its famous temples, dedicated to Zeus, Minerva, Apollo, Venus, Bacchus, and Aesculapius. The figure, *Satan's seat*, denotes the wickedness of these idolatrous temples and the nuptials to these gods. The name Pergamos meant the "place of nuptials." It was a fitting figure of Satan's seat.

3. "In those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr"—2:13.

There is a traditional claim that Antipas was once a bishop of the Pergamos church, but history does not identify him. In this book of symbols and code, the same reason for not mentioning other persons by name, such as Nero, the emperor, would also argue against the reality of these names. It is more consistent with the character of the book for Antipas to be a symbolic designation and representative

for martyrdom. The word *Antipas* is derived from *antipater*: “anti,” against; and “pater,” father, or paternal—and its meaning was, *against the gods*: hence, symbolic of faithfulness to Christ to the extent of “against all” gods of paganism. It therefore stood for all who would become victims of martyrdom in the persecutions to follow.

4. “Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam . . . also the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes”—2:14-17.

The mongrel prophet of the Old Testament contrived the evil scheme to destroy the purity of the Israelites by a two-fold seduction: first, seducing Israel into the worship of Baal; and second, tempting the men of Israel into lewdness by fornication. This doctrine of Balaam in the Pergamos church referred to apostate teaching. And the association of the Nicolaitanes with Balaam, in the teaching of immorality with the outward profession of Christianity, is a strong indication that the Nicolaitanes were identical with those who held the doctrine of Balaam, and it was a dual symbol of one party in the Pergamos church. Actually, then Balaam and the Nicolaitanes stood for the same things.

It is significant to mention here that the term *Nicolaitane* is the Greek equivalent of the name *Balaam* in the Hebrew, and they both meant “the destroyer of the people.” There is no factual authority for the view that the Nicolaitanes were the degenerate followers of a depraved and anonymous Nicolas, who is supposed to have demoralized and corrupted the Pergamos church. It is rather the symbolic association between Balaamism and Nicolaitanism. It seems too significant not to be true.

(4) The letter to the church at Thyatira.—2:18-29.

“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."

1. "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire"—2:18.

The reader is requested to turn back to the notes on chapter one for the incisiveness of this description.

2. "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess"—2:20.

The name *Jezebel* is the symbol of the powerful heathen influences and applied to the same defections designated by the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. The expression *that woman Jezebel* was a gradation of the same evil Jewish parties in the Pergamos and the Thyatira churches. She was representative of a pseudo-prophetess in the person of a female Judaizer, a sort of the *Lady Macbeth*, of the Shakespearean play; a representation of an added source of opposition and seduction to the already existing Balaams and Nicolaitanes.

3. "I will cast her into a bed . . . and I will kill her children"—2:21-23.

The Lord had given this leader of degenerates in the Thyatira church "a place to repent," that is, a respite, or period of probation, as he had done for the antediluvians in the days of Noah—but instead of accepting this suspension of sentence and repenting, they proceeded in their degeneracy from bad to worse, and the Lord said: "I will cast her into a bed," that is, of pain, instead of the sensuality which represented spiritual fornication in the corruptions of doctrine and practice. This symbolic Jezebel would be cast into a bed of retribution for her sins, referring to the judgment that would be brought upon the followers of these apostate teachers in the churches. And the Lord added: "I will kill her children"—that is, by exterminating the seeds of wickedness and false doctrine, thus preventing its offspring.

4. "The rest in thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine"—2:24.

This word of approval was directed to those in Pergamos who had not accepted the philosophy and practices of the libertine degenerates, who had not corrupted their minds with the depths of their degenerates and depraved philosophy—he would not lay upon them further duties than they were faithfully performing, nor burden them with the condemnations of the evil things in which they had not participated.

It seems evident that the depths of the degenerate philosophies of paganism which endangered these churches, and apparently taking root in them, were symbolized in the condemnations of the Balaams, the Nicolaitanes and the Jezebels within their midst.

5. "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come"—2:25.

The mention of the "rest" in Pergamos referred to those of their number who were holding to the truth against the Jezebel pagan philosophies and Nicolaitane doctrines, and

they were exhorted to hold fast to these truths until the rendering of the judgment against the evil elements in the church, and the execution of the judgments pronounced, in the events that were to follow. The statement "till I come" has no reference to the second advent of Christ. Jesus did not deceive the church at Thyatira into believing that his Second Advent and the Judgment Day would occur during their life time. The admonition referred to his coming in the events of judgment against the Jezebel paramours there. Again, it is solid proof that the things mentioned had fulfillment in the period of their own lives, the time to which the apocalypse belonged.

6. "To him that overcometh . . . will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron"—2:26-27.

This is not a future millennium text. It is plainly the imagery of the irresistible force of the gospel. It compares with Jer. 1:10; Isa. 11:9; Psa. 2:9; Psa. 110:2, and I Cor. 6:2. The figure of the rod is used to denote the chastening of the truth, and for the power and authority of Jesus Christ transferred in a figure to his followers who proclaim it. It is used to denote the power of the gospel published in the new dispensation, as previewed in the prophetic psalms—Psa. 2:9; 110:2. It is used for censure and discipline in I Cor. 4:21. In Rev. 2:26 it refers to the impact of the gospel on the pagan world through the victory of the church emerging from persecution.

(5) The letter to the church at Sardis—3:1-6.

"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.”

1. “Saith he that hath the seven spirits, and the seven stars”—3:1.

In Jesus Christ there is the uniting of these symbols of the *spirits* and the *stars*. The office of a spirit is to testify or teach; and the function of a star is to shine. It is a dual symbol which apparently refers to the uniting of the spirit of Christ in each church with the spirit of the congregation itself, that is, in the testimony of the truth, and having it shine as stars, as affirmed of God’s servants in Dan. 12:3.

2. “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead”—3:1.

The history of the city of Smyrna had been one of splendour, but it was generally known at this time to be in a state of decadence and decay. The Lord used this condition of the city to impress the spiritual state of the church—they had a name like the city in which they were situated, but they were spiritually dead. The religious history of Sardis, like the civil, was in the past.

3. “I have not found thy works perfect before God”—3:2.

There were no works in this church completed; they were works begun but not finished; their deeds were mere fragments of service, partial and imperfect, or incomplete. They were exhorted to “strengthen the things which remained, that are ready to die”—that is, the waning works that yet existed would soon wither and perish if not invigorated and revived. This was a stern letter to Sardis, for they were their own enemies. There were no enemies of false doctrine mentioned; their danger lay in their state of spiritual decadence.

## 4. "I will come upon thee as a thief"—3:3.

The Lord would come as a thief, not as a robber. The robber comes in violence, but the thief comes in the night of sleep. This warning compares to that of Paul in I Thess. 5:1-2, and applies to the manner, not to the time, of his coming. While they reposed in their spiritual slumber, the events depicted would unexpectedly overwhelm them. The warning was a picture of their own spiritual state of unpreparedness. It was not a reference to the time of his advent, but it did refer to his coming in the events of judgment, and his coming as a thief meant that they were not alert and ready.

## 5. "Thou has a few names even in Sardis . . . that are worthy"—3:4.

The statement that there were a few *even in Sardis* is a commentary on the condition of the city, as mentioned, and the like condition in the church. Notwithstanding the moral and civic state of the city of Sardis and the spiritual declension of the church, there was even yet a nucleus of faithful members.

The *garment* is the symbol of character, or the vestures of righteousness with which Christians must be clothed. The word "defiled" means contaminated. The term *white* denotes purity. The word *pure* means unalloyed, and is inherent; but defilement is contamination from without. There were a few in the Sardis church who had maintained an unalloyed state before Christ, and were undefiled by the degenerate and decadent outside surroundings. This teaches that moral qualities are essential to doctrinal recognition and spiritual acceptance by God and Christ.

## 6. "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life"—3:5.

This book of life is an allusion to a registry for worthy citizens, but the names of the deceased citizens are erased. This meant exclusion. But there were a few names in Sardis that would not be blotted out of the book of life. It clearly indicates that the names of the unworthy would be blotted out; but a name cannot be *blotted out* of the book



of life, if it had never been *recorded in it*; so here is positive proof for the possibility of apostasy.

(6) The letter to the church at Philadelphia—3:7-13.

“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. 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. 12 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.”

1. “He that hath the key of David”—3:7.

The word *key* conveys the meaning of authority, control and possession. In Isaiah’s prophecy of the One who should possess the house of David, in Isa. 22:22, the prophet said: “And the key of the house of David I will lay upon his shoulders; so he shall open, and none shall shut, and he shall shut, and none shall open.” The Lord’s statement to the church at Philadelphia was a direct reference to this prophecy, which was fulfilled in him. The key of David was “laid upon his shoulder,” which means the burden of government, and in Isa. 9:6-7, the prophet said: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and his name shall

be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice even for ever." This prophecy gives the reason why Jesus Christ said to the Philadelphians that he had the key of David, for he possessed the throne of David, and its government was upon his shoulder, with the authority to order it and establish it.

Furthering this point reference should be made to the word of the angel to Mary in Luke 1:31-33: "And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." There is no difference in the terms, the house of Jacob, the house of David, and the throne of David, and they were all spiritually possessed by Jesus Christ.

The words of the apostles of Christ add testimony to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ now possesses the house of David and occupies the throne of David.

Quoting from second psalm, in Acts 13:33-34, Paul declared that God had fulfilled the promise in giving to them "the sure mercies of David." The quotation reads: "God hath fulfilled the same unto their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David."

At the gathering of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, the apostle James, in Acts 15:13-17, quoted the prophecy of Amos 9:11-15, that the Christ would come to "build again the tabernacle of David . . . and set it up . . . that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." If the remnant of the Jewish world and all the Gentiles could then seek after God,

it follows that Christ had set up the spiritual tabernacle of David.

Added to these prophecies, and their declared fulfillment, is the declaration of the apostle Peter on Pentecost, in Acts 2:29-33, that the prophecies of David, that God would raise up one to sit on his throne, were fulfilled in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Peter declared that the prophecies meant that "he (God) would raise up Christ to sit on his (David's) throne," and that "he seeing this before (foreseeing the fulfillment) spake of the resurrection of Christ." Peter then concluded, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right of God exalted, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Summing it up, Jesus Christ has the throne of David, the tabernacle of David, the house of David, the sure mercies (or blessings) of David, and the key of David, in every spiritual sense of these terms, and there are no other prophecies or promises concerning David and Christ to be fulfilled. These passages teach that the house of David was perpetuated in the kingdom of Christ—his Church. It follows that the theory of the future return of Christ to occupy David's throne in an earthly millennium is the figment of theological fancy, imagination and error.

2. "He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth"—3:7-8.

Again, this is a reference to Isa. 22:22, and to the Philadelphians Jesus Christ applied the words *no man shutteth* to the promise that all the persecutors put together, persecutions combined, could not shut their door—a door which the Lord had opened. When the door of any institution is closed, it is out of business; but the persecutors could not close the door of the Philadelphian church. "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Like "the great door" which had been opened to Paul, which he mentioned in three epistles—I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12 and Col. 4:3—which opposition to him could not close; so in the midst the eventful period of persecution God had *set before them* an open door which Nero could not shut.

Persecution could not destroy that to which Christ had the key, and not having committed this key to any man, no man could open or shut this door.

3. "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet"—3:9.

This statement refers to the Judaizers, who were of "the synagogue of Satan," and who in claiming to be Jews were false pretenders in that they were not true Jews in the Lord's sight. "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not men, but of God." (Rom. 2:28-29) These outward Jews had been the chief enemies of the church, and had instigated the persecutions against Christians, who were God's Jews inwardly (spiritually); but these false Jews, the enemies of Christ, would go down in defeat by the persecutions which they themselves had instigated; and in the metaphor of verse 9, they would bow before the Cause upheld by the Philadelphian church. It meant that Judaism would be crushed, and would kneel before the door which no man could shut.

4. "I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation (trial), which shall come upon all the world"—3:10-11.

This promise was made to the Philadelphians in divine reciprocation of their having "kept the word" of Christ. They were not promised *exemption* trial, but *preservation* through the period of trial.

The *world* in Rev. 3:10 meant the empire. The *hour of trial* was the persecution period: in Matt. 24:29, the *tribulation*; in Rom. 16:20, the *bruising of Satan*; in 1 Cor. 7:26, the *present distress*; in Heb. 10:25, the *day approaching*; in Jas. 5:8, the *coming of the Lord draweth nigh*; in 1 Pet. 4:7, the *end of all things at hand*; in 1 Jno. 2:18, the *last time*—and in Revelation, the *hour of trial*, all pointing to the impending events attending the end of the Jewish system and state.

The Lord's statement in Matthew 24 was the forecast of the siege of Jerusalem; because of "the present distress," in Corinthians Paul dispensed advice concerning certain jeopardies involved in marriage; in Hebrews 10 they were exhorted not to forsake (meaning to abandon, renounce) their first day of the week assembling because of these threats of persecution (as the context of verses 25 through 39 indicates), and to exhort each other, as the day of persecution approached, not to so renounce and abandon the new covenant; in James 5, the declaration that the coming of Christ was *nigh* could not have referred to the return of Christ, for it did not occur therefore it was *not* *nigh*—it referred to the Lord's coming in these approaching events concerning which all of the apostles were exhorting the members of all the churches in every place; and John, in his epistle mentioned "the last time" in reference to the state of the Jews and of their nation; in the apocalypse he symbolized it as "the hour of trial," and assured the Philadelphians that the Lord would "come quickly," in the judgments and rewards that he had repeatedly promised to render.

The foregoing running summary of the expressions in the epistles of the New Testament to these impending events constitutes cumulative proof that the visions of Revelation related to the persecution period of the early church.

5. "To him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out"—3:12.

This is undoubtedly a reference to the demolition of the old temple. But the reward promised the Philadelphians for their faithfulness was a residence in the new temple, the spiritual temple, which could never be destroyed; out of which they would never be compelled to go, as in the case of the Jews in the destruction of the old temple of Jerusalem. The church is here conceived as a new building; and in this new temple of God the overcomers of the persecutions would be *pillars*; that is, to uphold the indestructible Cause of Him who had the key of David. The pillar supports the structure. When Samson pulled down the pillars supporting Dagon's temple, the whole structure collapsed. The

faithful constituents in the new building of God would be the supporting pillars to uphold the Cause which would triumph over all persecutions of this approaching "hour of trial."

The statement of the latter part of verse 12, referring to the "new Jerusalem," with a new name, simply means that the old Jerusalem, and all for which it stood, would be gone. As stated in chapter 21 of the apocalypse, the old things would pass away, and "behold, I will make all things new." This new temple would not be the restoration of the old house nor the reconstitutions of its ordinances. The emblem of the new name is used to distinguish a new institution, the church, from Judaism completely. It would not be a new dispensation of old ordinances: "The old things are passed away, behold all things are new."

The promise to the members of the church at Philadelphia was that in the spiritual temple of the new Jerusalem, in contrast with the old temple of the apostate Jerusalem, the Lord established them as permanent elements of the redeemed society of his church, which nothing could destroy. These principles prevail in the church today, and should ever be a source of strength and encouragement to all of its members.

(7) The letter to the church at Laodicea.—3:14-22.

"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 spue 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: 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."

1. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God"—3:14.

The *God of Amen* means the God of truth, as stated in Deut. 7:9: "Know ye therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." The repeated expression *the faithful and true witness*, refers to the things of the apocalypse—the absolute certainty of all the announcements made by his angels and agents in all of the visions.

The reminder that he is *the beginning of the creation of God* is the same in substance as that he is Alpha and Omega, meaning that he is the beginning as well as the end, the first as well as the last. It carries the same affirmation as in Jno. 1:3, "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." It means that in the beginning with God he was the active principle in creation, and is the Lord over all creation by primogeniture right—that is, the exclusive right of inheritance belonging to the firstborn. This right possessed by Jesus Christ is also affirmed by Paul in Heb. 1:1-2: "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds . . . being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." In priority of existence, having been the agent of all creation, he is Lord of the new creation, the whole spiritual realm.

2. "Thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot"—3:15-16.

While outward rejection may, in some sense, appear to be preferable to cold profession, it does not seem in har-

mony with the grace of redemption to make this passage mean that God would rather these Laodiceans had never accepted the gospel at first. The purpose of the comparison is to rebuke *lukewarmness*, which produces nausea. It means that fervency is a condition of fidelity. Fervent heat (II Pet. 3:10) means intense heat; and fervent water is boiling water; and in Rom. 12:10, Paul admonishes the members of the body to be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

The Lord’s aversion to the state of lukewarmness is expressed in the warning *I will spew thee out of my mouth*. The advocates of the absolute and unconditional security of the believer have appropriated the words of Paul in Eph. 1:13, that the believer is “sealed with that holy Spirit,” to their dogma of the impossibility of apostasy, by claiming that a *sealed believer* cannot get out. Aside from the fallacy of the argument itself, the Lord’s statement to the Laodiceans explains how an unfaithful believer does get out—he is *spewed out*, by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

3. “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”—3:17-19.

Based on this statement the Lord said: *I counsel thee*. He informed them, with words of severity, that they were *wretched*, and *miserable*, and *poor*, and *blind*, and *naked*—which, without any other words to be added, simply meant that they were in utter spiritual destitution. He recommended, in their own dialect of merchandising, that they buy of him a *gold* of greater value than their material wealth; and the *white raiment* of righteousness to clothe their nakedness; so that *the shame of thy nakedness does not appear*: as yet, their nakedness had not been exposed; it was within their membership. This note of judgment was a warning of the divine exposure of their spiritual nakedness.

To correct their state of spiritual blindness the Lord admonished them to *anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see*—to get rid of their self-deception. This figurative language, of course, cannot be literally applied. The *eyesalve* meant spiritual enlightenment, as in Psa. 19:8:



"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." The *gold* which the Lord persuaded them to buy meant the raiment of righteousness, as in I Pet. 5:5: "Be clothed with humility"; and Rev. 7:14: "These are they . . . which washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

These are strong analogies employed by the Lord counselling the Laodiceans to seek the true riches. There were no charges of the evils of error which existed in some of the churches. The Laodiceans professed the truths of the gospel, but with a materialistic apathy which rendered them unconscious of being out of communion with Christ. To assure them of divine love and concern for their restoration, Jesus said: *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*. The severity of his rebuke was not rejection but a sign of love which seeks to prevent their condition reaching that stage. The mandate, *Be zealous and repent*, meant the zeal of repentance itself; that it could not be performed in the apathy and passivity of their present attitude. In Matt. 12:41, Jesus said that the people of Nineveh "repented at the preaching of Jonah," but in referring to that event in the book of Jonah, it reads: "When God saw their works." That is evidently the meaning of the zeal of repentance. It cannot be performed in nonchalance.

4. "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"—3:20.

Here is the note of deep affection in the metaphor of the common meal, which the ancients regarded as a manifestation of fraternal confidence. The old term *sup* here signifies spiritual communion, which the Lord offered to restore with the Laodiceans. In common parlance today the word *fellowship* is in vogue.

The remedial import of this high light in the Lord's persuasions to Laodicea, is that reconciliation begins with Jesus Christ. He reverses here the order of Matt. 7:7: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Here the Lord himself knocks, asking that they open unto him. The people of old accompanied their knocking with addressing

those inside, in order that they might know who was knocking, and thus whether to open. Jesus here announces himself as the One seeking admission; but he does not force entrance. Here the truth of free moral agency incidentally appears—man can receive or reject divine overtures.

5. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne"—3:21.

Here is the constructive figure of a sitting court to which the faithful would be given admission to sit with Christ in his throne, to be associated with Christ in his spiritual rule. In chapter 2:26 this rule is said to be with "a rod of iron," which, as previously stated, means the invincible power of the truth, or gospel of Christ. In I Tim. 2:11-12, the apostle taught Timothy that this rule is in process now, and that reigning with Christ is concurrent with living with him.

This enthronization with Christ simply stated means that as Christians are governed by the rule of Christ, in this compliance with his teaching they become a part of his government. The immediate imagery of this passage therefore is, that the faithful victors over the persecutions, having exemplified obedience to his rule, are seated with Christ the Conqueror in his ruling throne. This picture is culminated in the throne scene of the martyrs Rev. 20:4, as shown in the commentary on the verses of that chapter.

6. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches"—3:22.

What the Spirit said to these seven churches has spiritual application to all churches. The lessons may be summed up as follows:

One: the *Ephesian* church was commended for an outward work and labour and patience, but were censured for having left their first love. By comparison with the Thessalonians—who were said (I Thess. 1:3) to have had "a work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope"—it appears that the missing qualities in the church at Ephesus were *faith*, or fidelity, in works; and *love*, or de-

votion, in labour; and *hope*, or expectation, in patience. Theirs was an external work, a servile labour, and an impassive hope. They had rejected false teachers and were doctrinally sound; they abhorred the libertine practices of Nicolaitanism, and were maintaining moral rectitude. But the Lord issued the irrevocable directive for immediate resolution to restore the missing qualities, under the pain of the withdrawal of divine presence.

Two: The church at *Smyrna* had attained congregational perfection, for which they received divine approval, but no assurance for the suspension of suffering was given to them; rather, they were exhorted to maintain the same degree of faithfulness in martyrdom that they had manifested in life, and their vouchsafed reward would be the inestimable crown of life.

Three: the church at *Pergamos* had theoretically rejected all forms of idolatry and pagan sensuality, but the harboring of libertines and idolaters within their membership would expose them to the Lord's declaration of war against these heathenisms within the borders of the church.

Four: The church at *Thyatira* had been constant in the possession and practice of the virtues of charity, and service, and patience and works; but the purity of these qualities had been somewhat tainted by their tolerance of certain wicked influences among them; nevertheless with divine approval of their constancy, they were exhorted to cling to the things that had been approved, with the promise of the Lord's presence in the time of tribulation.

Five: the church at *Sardis* was reprovved for the declension of spiritual life and were upbraided for general decadence; but they were extended probation under a mandate for rehabilitation.

Six: The par-excellent church at *Philadelphia* was the object of full divine approval, in nothing blameworthy, and was given the Lord's guarantee of preservation and deliverance from the imminent period of tribulation, the reward for their devoted loyalty to his Word, and faithful allegiance to his Name.

Seven: The church at *Laodicea* was the object of stern rebuke for their failure to evaluate the true riches, and their blindness to their own spiritual deficiencies, and were threatened with expulsion from all communion with Christ, if they further rejected his overtures; but he would extend to them opportunity to open their hearts to his entrance, and he would accept them in mutual communion and fellowship.

This concludes the visional prologue, and with the fourth chapter the general apocalypse begins.

# **BOOK OF REVELATION**

## **SECTION THREE**

### **THE APOCALYPSE OF THE CONQUERING CHRIST**

**(CHAPTERS FOUR TO ELEVEN)**

**(THE FIRST SERIES OF SYMBOLS)**



## CHAPTERS 4 TO 11.

4 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.

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.

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.

5 AND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

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.

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.

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 honour, 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.

6 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.

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:

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 fellowservants 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.

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 bondman, 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?

7 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.

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

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

6 Of the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim *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 Issachar *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.

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 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.

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.

8 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.

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 thunderings, 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.

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!

9 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.

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.

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.

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 mouth, 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.

**10** 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,

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.

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

6 And sware 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.

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

11 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.

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.

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 an 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 an 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.

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.

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.

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 shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest 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.

# THE APOCALYPSE OF THE CONQUERING CHRIST

(CHAPTERS 4 TO 11)

With this section begins the Revelation proper, following the antecedent vision of Chapter 1 and the preliminary messages to the seven churches.

This section surrounds Christ as conqueror, in conflict of his Cause with the secular powers and Jewish authorities. The developments are gathered around the divine promise of 1:7—"Behold he cometh," and 22:7—"Behold, I come quickly," coupled with and corresponding to the closing prayer "even so, come Lord Jesus." It signified the coming of the Lord in the immediate great events, which he would overrule to the triumph of his cause and the success of his kingdom—Chapter 11:15.

The repetition of the promise to come must be interpreted in keeping with the non-literal character of the book; hence, not his personal coming, not the second coming advent, but in the various events, judgments and rewards—Chapters 1:7 and 22:12.

The phrases "the coming of the Lord"; and "his coming"; and "son of man cometh"; have numerous connotations in the scriptures.

(1) It is used in reference to the first advent of Christ—Genesis 49:10; John 6:14; Acts 7:52; Matthew 11:3; II Peter 1:16.

(2) It is further used in reference to his second advent—Acts 1:11; I Corinthians 11:26; II Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23 and, hence in these passages to the end of time.

(3) It refers to his presence in the apostles—John 14:28; John 14:3; Matthew 28:20, hence in these verses to inspiration, to his indwelling in them.

(4) It indicates the presence of Christ in the Christian—John 14:23; Revelation 3:20.

(5) It designates the destruction of Jerusalem—Zechariah 14:1; Matthew 24:3-30; Matthew 26:64; James 5:7-8.

(6) It denotes the appearance of his kingdom—Matthew 16:27-8; Mark 9:1—his coming on Pentecost.

(7) It is applied to the death of a Christian—I Corinthians 1:7; I Corinthians 4:7.

(8) It is descriptive of the judgment day—Matthew 15:31; II Timothy 4:1; II Thessalonians 2:1; I Peter 3:10; Jude 21.

(9) It is connected with the fulfillment of promises—Romans 9:9; Malachi 3:2 and 4:5; Acts 2:20; Acts 15:16.

(10) It symbolizes events of both retribution and reward in the imagery of Revelation—1:7; 2:5, 25; 3:11, 20; 22:7, 20.

From beginning to end the book abounds in imagery, full of puzzling enigmas, but notwithstanding the obscurities which give rise to conflicting interpretation, it nevertheless finds both application and fulfillment in the history of the first century period of persecution.

Albert Barnes remarked that he was unable to apply the symbols of Revelation until he had read Gibbon's history of Rome. Philip Schaff said that the internal evidence is strongly in favor of the conclusion of many scholars who hold to the early date—between A.D. 60 to 70—before the destruction of Jerusalem, supporting the view that it was written under the Neroan period rather than the Domitian, being therefore descriptive of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, the downfall of Judaism and the dissolution of paganism and the heathen world by the expansion of Christianity.

The imagery therefore surrounds the ancient city of Jerusalem, not Rome. The inclusion of the Roman Empire into the symbols was collateral to the persecutions, the Roman emperors representing the secular power with which the destinies of Jerusalem and Judaism were affiliated in the political history. The contents of the book confirm this conclusion of an impressive number of scholars, and the

past historical exegesis rather than the prophetic and continuous-historical theory is the only satisfactory application of its majestic and magnificent imagery.

It unrolls a sublime panorama of the victorious Christ, called the Lamb; and of his triumphant church, called the Bride—the Lamb's bride. As a light shining in darkness, it was a book of hope and comfort to a church on the threshold of persecution, for amidst the ominous signs of calamity was also the omen of victory.

Convinced of and committed to this view, the author will follow this exegesis.

## I

### THE THRONE IN HEAVEN

(Chapters 4 to 5)

#### (1) The One on the throne—4:1-3.

“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.”

#### 1. “A door was opened in heaven”—4:1.

The word heaven here signifies the source of all revelation, being the place of God's residence. (Daniel 4:26; John 1:51; John 3:27; Romans 1:18; Galatians 1:8; Hebrews 12:25; I Peter 1:12; Matthew 16:17) And from the heavenly throne proceeded these visions. It is the abode of God who is “the God of heaven.” (I Kings 8:30; Daniel 2:28; Matthew 5:45) It is there that God has his throne. (Isaiah 66:1; Psalms 103:19; Psalms 11:4) It is the seat of sovereignty, the symbol of regal authority, from which justice and judgment are dispensed. (Psalms 89:14) Being

thus the sign of royalty, *throne* is applied to the center of all divine authority. (Matthew 19:28) "Come up hither and I will show thee." The apocalypse in its complete composition proceeded from the one who sits on the throne. (Daniel 2:47; Matthew 11:27; Philippians 3:15; John 4:1)

2. "A throne was set in heaven"—4:2.

The throne was not there for this vision only, it was set, established as the throne of heaven. (Psalms 119:89)

3. "He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone"—4:3.

Here was the figure of intense splendor. *Jasper* was an opaque species of different colors, subject to high polish. The New Testament use of the term "jasper," here and elsewhere referred to a transparent gem, the diamond, or the translucent chalcedon. *Sardine* (or *Sardius*) was an ancient favorite of the engraver's art, discovered in Asia Minor, of lasting beauty of color; it was a brilliant flesh-red. But no physical or material substance can be made comparable to God's person; at best it serves only as an emblem of the resplendent and exquisite grandeur and glory of his divine Being.

4. "A rainbow round about the throne"—4:3.

The rainbow stands for a covenant—Genesis 9:13-17—and the emblem here is of the covenanted protection from the judgment of impending events; not escape from the suffering, but exemption from judgments, which would come upon the enemies of the church.

5. "In sight like an emerald"—4:3.

The rainbow is a seven-color reflection. Its brilliance appears between the shining sun and the rain clouds. Here *emerald* in the bow is specified—a very precious gem of deep green color—which is its real value, as the deepest colors were the prized. The word *emerald* had a root meaning of *glowing*. The emerald-green in the rainbow signified that through the grace of patience deliverance was vouchsafed.

## (2) The four and twenty elders—4:4-5.

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. 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."

1. "Four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting"—4:4.

The *four and twenty* signified the patriarchs and apostles—twelve each, twenty-four in number. It was the symbol of the totality of God's people in the New Testament church; the whole body of the redeemed. The twelve tribes and the twelve apostles represented the completeness of the church; the Old and the New were combined in the symbol represented in the chiefs: the patriarchs of the Old, and the apostles of the New.

## 2. "Lightnings . . . voices . . . thunderings"—4:5.

These were signs of a procession of terrible and awful events and is an impressive representation of Omnipotence. (Exodus 19:16) It was a symbol of the accompanying divine presence in the "seven lamps and the seven spirits" before the throne, signifying universal presence, with eyes to search whole world, and to bring all men to judgment.

## (3) The four living beasts (beings)—4:6-11.

"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. 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."

1. The *sea of glass*—4:6.

This denotes the great broad space. A throne chamber with crystal pavement as a figure of magnitude and grandeur was added to the scene.

2. The beings *full of eyes*—4:6.

The eyes were before, behind, and all around, symbolizing superhuman intelligence. It was imagery of the divine providential rule and protection of an all-seeing God.

3. The *four beasts*—4:6-7.

"In the midst of the throne and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind."

The meaning of the word beasts here is *beings*, or creatures resembling the animals. It is necessary to distinguish these "beasts" or beings from the *beasts* that symbolized the persecutors. These beings were "in the midst . . . round about the throne"; hence, not beasts as in the persecutor symbol.

The *first* beast was like a lion, symbolizing strength; the *second* beast was like a calf (ox), meaning endurance under yoke; the *third* beast was the face of a man, signifying intelligence, reason, and wisdom; the *fourth* beast was like an eagle, representing penetrating vision and swiftness in the execution of judgment. The four beasts (beings) had six wings each (Verse 8), and the wings were full of eyes, indicating the universal survey of an all-seeing Omniscience. And they *rest not day and night*—praising the One on the throne without surcease. There was no suspension of God's providence; no cessation in the honor ascribed; no interruption of the praise; no intermission in the various dispensations and acts of his providence and in the praise,

glory, homage derived and received, and in the worship rendered to him who was declared to be eternal.

#### 4. The doxology—4:8-10.

Compare the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2; and the angelic guard of attendants, suited to a grand composite scene, it pictured a glorious epiphany. Acting in concert, the creature—beings—say, “holy, holy, Lord God Almighty”; and the elders on the throne-seats fell before Him who sat on the throne and worshiped in unison, without discord; in unity of worship, and in unity of honor to one God; and they cast their crowns before Him as a sign of surrender to God’s will, for they were as he *willed* and were created to do his pleasure.

#### (4) The sealed book—5:1-5.

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

1. “In the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book”—5:1.

The *book* was a scroll wherein things were registered, engraved. The productions that are now called books were unknown in this early age in the present form of printing and binding. They were usually in the form of a scroll, written or engraved on material known as parchment. (II Tim. 4:13) A sealed book was a roll of parchment, or scroll, bound by a band, with a seal affixed to the tie of the band or to the knot. Reference is made to this usage in



Isa. 29:11, and illustrations of it have been produced in most of the dictionaries of the Bible lands and times.

This book which was *written within and on the back-side* contained the events which were depicted. The unsealing of the closed book was the revelation of the predicted events within.

2. "Who is worthy to open—and to loose—no man in heaven nor in earth"—5:2.

The *strong angel* is emphasizing the important proclamation. The *great voice* is comparable to the announcement.

The declaration *no man in heaven nor in earth* meant that it belonged only to the One on the throne to open it; no *created* being, terrestrial or celestial; no man *in earth* belonging to authorities of the earth; and, *neither under the earth*, or belonging to any order of humanity whether *in* authority as head or *under* subjection to powers of the earth, whether in the realm of living men or of the hades domain of the disembodied spirits of men—no man, no created being was *worthy* or *able*, in finite limitations to open the book.

The restriction *neither to look thereon* meant that they were not permitted to see or know what was in the book. To open meant to understand and reveal the significance.

3. "And I wept because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book"—5:4.

The inspired seer wept in the awesome realization that the things within the book were beyond human disclosure.

4. "Weep not: behold the Lion of Judah, the root of David hath prevailed"—5:5.

The comforting counsel to *weep not* shows that the anxiety was premature and the fear was unfounded; they were only tears of interruption; hence they were to withhold the weeping and wait to see the full procession.

The title, *Lion of Judah* was symbolic of power. The lion is the most courageous beast, the king of the forest, an emblem of strength and valor. It was used here with *pre-*

*vailed* to designate the invincible Christ who would conquer his own and his people's enemies.

The symbol of the *tribe of Judah* connects with the prophetic blessing of Genesis 49:8-12. The capital of the tribe was *Ariel*, meaning "lion of God" (Isaiah 29:1). Hence, *the lion of the tribe of Judah* was descriptive of the lineage and character of the divine descendant of the tribe. Judah, under divine favor, was a nation in itself, typical and prophetic, in such biblical phrases as the "house of Judah, the kindred, stock, and lineage" as in Genesis 12:17; I Timothy 5:8; Luke 2:4; II Samuel 7:18. The prophecies pointed to Christ, the spiritual head of the house of Judah—Isaiah 22:21-22—having the rulership—the divine government, which Judah typified. And he was the minister of the new covenant which God made with the "house of Judah," as stated in Hebrews 8, verses 8 to 10. The limited phrase "with the house of Israel," in verse 10, indicated that in the new covenant there would be no distinction—Israel was Judah, the whole. Thus the Lord sprang out of Judah. (Heb. 7:14)

*The root of David:* By metonymy the Christ is called the *root* of Jesse (Isaiah 11:10) and of David (Revelation 5:5). The plant or branch springs from and grows out of the root. Christ is the *root*, instead of the *branch*, which springs from the root of the spiritual people of David. (Rom. 15:12) Isaiah uses the words, rod, stem and branch (Isa. 11:1); and Zechariah gives him the title of "The Branch" (Zech. 3:8); also in 6:12, the title *Branch* is used to show that He was to be the plant itself, the stem (source), and rod (on which branches grow) as on the vine of John 15:1. The name of *David* in prophetic office and regal character was the most eminent type of the Christ. (I Sam. 16:13; II Sam. 2:4; II Sam. 5:3). As ruler over the temporal kingdom of Israel, he was the forerunner to the Son of David who should be ruler of the spiritual Israel forever. (Isa. 9:7; Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; Luke 1:32-33) In the prophecy of Ezekiel 34:23-24 Christ is the new David of the new Israel; the one shepherd of the one flock. The distinction between Judah and Israel would be lost, and

would no longer exist. Further references to the tabernacle, the throne, the mercies, the blessings, and the key of David were all applied and ascribed to Jesus Christ.

(5) The Lamb in the midst of the throne—5:6-10.

“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. 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.”

1. “In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts (beings), 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”—5:6.

The Lamb *in the midst of the throne* was Christ, here represented as a lamb instead of a lion because of his having been sacrificially slain; but the slain Lamb was now risen and is seen as the conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah to deliver his people from their foes and oppressors.

2. “Having seven horns and seven eyes—which are the seven spirits of God sent forth”—5:6.

The *seven horns and eyes* are the symbols of perfection in all of his divine attributes, and the *seven spirits of God*, which were sent forth were symbolic of the perfection of the truth in the testimony of his witnesses. (Heb. 1:7,14)

3. “He came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne”—5:7.

The Lamb took the book from him on the throne. The One on the throne is God. The One who took the book is Christ—the Lamb “in the midst of the throne.”

4. “The four creatures (beings), the four and 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 the saints”—5:8.

Because he was the One who was “able to open the book” and to Him complete and united homage was due; not one creature (being), nor one elder, but the four of the one group, and the twenty-four of the other, representing complete and united worship and adoration: having every one of them harps and golden bowls (vials) full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.

5. “Having every one of them harps”—5:8.

The harp was not an instrument of mourning, but of rejoicing. In Israel’s captivity the harps were hung on the willows (Psalms 137:2) in representation of Israel’s sorrow. The symbol here is not that of sorrow in the calamities to come, but of rejoicing in the triumph of their deliverance, by the Lion that “hath prevailed,” and who would lead them through all the scenes of conflict enclosed in the book, which was now about to be disclosed by him, in scenes of the ultimate eventual victory of the unfolding experiences.

6. “And golden vials full of odors”—5:8.

The vial, or censer, was a vessel used in altar service to contain the fire with which incense was burned, the perpetual fire from the altar of burnt offerings. It sometimes stands for the altar itself as in Heb. 13:10: “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” Its use for common purposes was positively forbidden, and no other composition or preparation was acceptable, either of fire or of incense than that which was prescribed. (II Chron. 26:16-21; Lev. 10:1-4)

## 7. "The prayers of saints"—5:8.

The incense was symbolic of intercession, typical of the intercession of Christ for his saints. Here it is designated to be *the prayers of saints* because the saints in tribulation were imploring the intercession of the Lamb. In chapter 8:3, the incense was "added to the prayers of the saints," which signified the merits of the death of Christ, and which extended and amplified the symbol of intercession. The altar stood for that upon which sacrifice was offered as mentioned in I Kings 13:1-2; 18:30, and it was appropriated exclusively in the offering of sacrifices for sin on behalf of the one who had offended the law. It symbolized Christ as the Christian's only sacrifice, and there is no need for any other altar. It is upon his altar that spiritual offerings are now made (Heb. 13:10) and to him all true worship ascends (Heb. 13:15). This vision of Revelation is based on the typical significance of the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament, which not only reminded the people of sin and the need of expiation, but prefigured the atonement of Christ doctrinally envisioned in Isa. 53:10, and mentioned in I Pet. 2:24, as having been accomplished.

8. "They sang a new song, saying, thou wast slain . . . and hast redeemed us to God . . . out of every kindred, people, nation"—5:9.

The *new song* was the theme of redemption from sin by the blood of the Lamb, in contrast with redemption of Old Testament Israel from the physical servitude of the song by the sea.

"Redeemed to God" signified the restoration and re-possession of a forfeited state, a redemption by a blood price of an inheritance that was lost.

"Out of every kindred, tongue, people, nation." The new Israel was not tribal or national but composed of all men of all nations, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. It was the sublime vision of the new people of God. (Hos. 1:10; Rom. 9:25-26; I Pet. 2:10)

9. "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth"—5:10.

*Kings:* This refers to the reign of Christ in the kingdom now present and existing—"made us"—it was of past performance and establishment; not a future kingdom, but present. The church is the priesthood now (I Pet. 2:5,9), an analogy based on Ex. 19:6. The church sustains a *kingly* relation to Christ, and of it the members "reign with Christ"; hence, they are kings in royalty with him. (Rom. 8:17) It is a reference to the state of the church under the gospel—under the spiritual government of Christ. (II Tim. 6:15) The term "king" signified a sovereign prince or ruler in a kingdom. (Prov. 8:15) It is applied to God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe (Psa. 44:4); and to Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the church (Psa. 2:6; 45:1; Eph. 4:5); and to all true Christians who as heirs, reign with him in life. (Rom. 8:17; Rom. 5:17; II Tim. 2:12)

*Priests:* The church sustains a *priestly* relation to Christ, and its members participate in the offering of spiritual sacrifices. (Heb. 13:15) The word *priest* is contracted from *elder* or *presbyter*, and was a general name for ministers of God's service. (Heb. 10:11) In all scriptures it denotes one who offers sacrifice. It is applied to Jesus Christ in the highest office, who offered himself for the sins of all men. (Heb. 4:14; 7:17; 8:4; 9:11-12) It applies to every true believer (Christian), who himself offers spiritual sacrifices. (Heb. 13:15; I Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6) Under the law the priest was a person consecrated and ordained to teach the people, pray for them and offer sacrifices. (Lev. 4:5-6) Christians perform all of these services and functions now in the new priesthood, the church.

*Reign:* The word is variously used literally and figuratively. Commonly the word to reign means to rule, or to govern as a sovereign prince. (II Sam. 5:4-5; Matt. 2:6) God reigns as absolute monarch, he governs and disposes of all things in heaven and earth. (Psa. 93:1); Christ reigns in this dispensation in his kingdom, the church (Luke 1:33; Matt. 2:6; Rom. 15:12; I Cor. 15:24-25); Death reigned

from Adam to Moses, Rom. 5:14—that is, prevailed, held sway, dominion; Sin reigns, when the motions of sin are obeyed, as one obeys the law or command of a king, when it exercises an absolute uncontrolled power over the soul (Rom. 6:12); Grace reigns through righteousness, prevails through the gospel to abolish the rule and dominion of sin, as we are governed by what it teaches (Rom. 5:21; Tit. 2:11-12); and Christians reign in righteous living with Christ (Rom. 5:17). All who receive grace in gift of righteousness (forgiveness in Christ), and partake of the spiritual life, whereby sin is conquered, reign with apostles in conforming to their teaching and example; and reign with Christ as in the sufferings with him in the death to sin and partaking of his suffering (II Tim. 2:12).

*We shall reign:* Literally rendered the passage reads *are reigning*—referring in the Revelation context to their continuing conquests in the trials that were present.

What the four creatures and twenty-four elders were chanting in unison, as a complete representative company, was the prospect of a glorious triumph over their oppressors. It symbolized a reign of victory, a symbol that the oppressions to be revealed in the seals could not consume them; the wrath of monarchs could not destroy them; nor the power of kings and emperors defeat them. They would survive; they would live; they would reign *on the earth*, not in future glory, but reign there and then as conquerors and overcomers in an undefeated, triumphant cause. The church was symbolized as being complete and imperishable in conflict with their heathen oppressors.

#### (6) The angelic symphony—5:11-12.

“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 honour, and glory, and blessing.”

1. "I heard the voice of many angels . . . and the beasts (beings), and the elders . . . ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"—5:11.

*The voice:* The sound of myriad thousands of angels and beings was but one voice, a concert of praise; with one object, the Lamb; and with one theme, in symphony of the adoration to the Lamb.

*Thousands:* The literal computation would be ten thousand times ten thousand—100,000,000—One hundred million, plus thousands of thousands, on multiplied thousands more. So figuratively it signified that all the church on earth, represented by the four and twenty elders, and the whole family of heaven (Eph. 3:14), represented by the multiplied decimals, joined in the adoration of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. (see verse 13)

2. "Worthy is the Lamb . . . to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, blessing"—5:12.

The number of these attributes is *seven*. It represents the complete essence of divinity. The seven attributes are distinct, no overlapping, no synonymous repetition, every word a definition of its own, a jewel in his crown of divine splendor.

*Power:* It is that attribute of supreme and absolute and underived authority (Rom. 1:20; I Tim. 6:16)—the inherent right to do what is his will, and to hinder what is not his will. (Matt. 6:13) It is all power (Matt. 28:18); in earth over men (John 17:2; Psa. 110); over the devil (Heb. 2:14); in heaven over angels (Col. 1:16; I Pet. 3:22); to him, the head of all principalities and power, the angelic chorus ascribed all praise.

*Riches:* The abounding unlimited sources to bestow and endow all things pecuniary and spiritual. (Psa. 24:1; Rom. 12:33)

*Wisdom:* The attribute and the title of him from whom it emanates (Pro. 3:19; 8:22-23). Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God personified from everlasting before all



worlds, to be the *Word* through whom the Father resolved all of his purposes, to create, to govern, to uphold, to judge, to save—all wisdom is ascribed to him (Col. 2:3)—“Where shall wisdom be found”?—Job exclaimed: Referring to the sublime and eminent wisdom, existing only in the counsels of God far beyond man’s reach. The excellence of knowledge and prudence are combined and centered in him who is from everlasting the wisdom of God. The eighth chapter of Proverbs is a large and profound discourse on the divine wisdom personified in Him.

*Strength*: The strength of anything is its substance, and in beings it is their character. The strength here mentioned is an integral attribute belonging to God, an essential divine emanation; the prerogative to rule over all things; and is joined to omnipotence and majesty. (Psa. 93:1) The Lamb of the apocalypse was *worthy to receive* all the adoration in these attributes.

*Honour*: The word is not employed here in the sense of outward respect or deference, but denotes the integrity of a Being who deserves adoration, a divine Being, clothed with honor as a part of his Being; it is an attribute, not a term of praise. In its original sense honor is derived from honesty; it denotes what is a superlative moral attribute.

*Glory*: In this word is the effulgence or brightness of God, called in Heb. 1:3, the *brightness* of his glory. It is absolute perfection in holiness, in contrast with men who come short of it (Rom. 3:23). God is the King of Glory (Psa. 24:8), and Christ is the “express image of his person,” “being the brightness of his glory”—the divine effulgence. As God is called “King of glory” (Psa. 24:8), Christ is called “Lord of glory” (Jas. 2:1), and the “hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Moses pleaded to see the glory of God (Exodus 33:8) in manifestation; the heavens declare it (Psa. 19:1); Christ is His glory (Heb. 1:3); and *has* the glory of God (John 17:5); and glory is ascribed to him in all the benedictions in the apostolic epistles (Rom. 16:27; I Tim. 1:17; Phil. 4:20); and in the climax of them all the angelic anthem in chorus and song ascribe to Him all honour and glory.

*Blessing*: This is a word of frequent occurrence, the meaning of which must be determined by the connection. Men bless God in ascribing praise; God blesses men in temporal and spiritual mercies bestowed. The evident meaning here in the doxology of the angels, is praise, adoration, thanksgiving, blessing, that he alone, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, was *able to open the book*, and reveal its seals. In this sense Israel blessed God (Josh. 22:23); so did Nehemiah, Ezra and Job (Neh. 8:6; Job 1:21); in the same circumstances Daniel blessed the God of heaven (Dan. 2:19); and Simeon blessed God for Jesus (Luke 2:28); and Paul proclaimed the Creator blessed forever (Rom. 1:25) and the Christ is God blessed forever (Rom. 9:5)—“Who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” All of this was the mingled praise of “the voice of many angels.”

(7) The universal antiphonal—5:13-14.

“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.”

1. “Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea”—5:13.

The whole creation in antiphonal response joined the symphony of praise “unto him that sitteth on the throne”—God, the creator—“and unto the Lamb”—Christ, the saviour. As the host is enlarged to “every creature,” the praise is expanded to include both the One on the throne and the One in the midst—God and the Lamb.

2. "And the four creatures (beings) said, Amen"—5:14.

Their scene was finished. "And the four and twenty elders . . . worshipped him that liveth forever." Thus was ascribed united homage to Him who sat on the throne, to God, and to the Lamb of God who lives forever and ever. He who had no beginning and shall have no end, who created all things and is over all things, is the One who did these things.

## II

### THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS

#### (Chapter 6)

##### (1) The ominous announcement—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."

*The Lamb opened:* Christ the Lamb, the only one able to open, begins in order the opening of the seven seals.

*The noise of thunder:* The voice of "one of the creatures (beings)" announced the opening, with a noise like thunder. It signified the ominous import of the announcement, the awesome note of what was about to be revealed.

*Come and see:* This meant that the announcer was ready to show unto John what was to occur successively in the struggle with and overthrow of persecuting powers.

##### (2) The mounted horses—6:2-8.

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."

The horse is portrayed in the Old Testament as the noblest of animals. (Gen. 49:17; Job 39:19-25) The beasts of burden were oxen and asses, horses were warriors, reserved for the arsenals of war, used by kings, either mounted or harnessed to chariots. (Ex. 9:23; Esther 6:8) Solomon imported them from Syria and Egypt. (I Kings 4:26; 10:26, 29; II Chron. 1:14-17; II Chron. 9:25) They were here in the apocalypse employed under different colors to represent the character of the event as Zech. 1:8; 6:2-6, and to signify the fleetness and the strength to represent angels.

Before Solomon's time no horsemen were mentioned in the armies of Israel. The kings were forbidden to keep many horses (Deut. 17:16), as a military disarmament plan to prevent oppression and tyranny; and as a domestic policy to prevent unnecessary burdens on the people by the imposition of taxes; and further to discourage trust in horses and chariots by Israel's kings, who were exhorted to put their trust in God. (Psa. 20:7) Solomon had horses in great number, which he kept for pomp rather than war. He is said to have had forty thousand stalls for his horses and chariots. It appears that Solomon specialized in horses and wives!

Among the heathen, horses were consecrated to the sun idol (II Kings 23:11); for the worship of the sun by the easterns prevailed for many centuries, and the horse was

consecrated to that deity over all the east. The sun-god was represented as riding his chariot drawn by the swiftest and most beautiful horses, completing every day the journey from east to west, for the communication of light to all mankind. It is worthy of note that the secrets and ceremonies of some fraternal orders today, a certain one in particular, based on the ancient mysteries surrounding the god and goddess of the sun, Osiris and Isis, are not far removed from this ancient deism.

At one time the Lord forbade the kings of Judah to multiply horses as an embargo measure to prevent trade between Judah and Israel, fearing that by means of commerce, as a system of communication, Israel would become infected with the Egyptian idolatries.

In the Old Testament apocalypses, as in Revelation, the symbols of the horse and its rider were the most graphic, if not the most moving imagery. The striking resemblance in the vision of horses, in the first chapter of Zechariah, to that of the four horses in the sixth chapter of Revelation, parallels the historical events in the fortunes of Old Testament Israel with the corresponding experiences of the New Testament church.

#### 1. The white horse (the first seal)—6:2.

“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.”

The white horse and its rider were a symbol of the invincible Lord; riding a white horse was the symbol of majesty in a war of victory.

*He (the Christ) that sat on him had a bow:* The bow was for distance signifying a long conflict; the sword symbolized the clash of combat in the surge of battle. In the ancient armor, the arms of war were the shield, the sword, the spear and the bow. The bow was the instrument for shooting the arrow. This slender combustible missile shot from the bow was the chief dependence in attack and defence. David refers to “the sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.” (Psa. 120:4) The fire from combustible juniper wood was conveyed on the arrow tip to its

target, and became a symbol of terror from God. (Psa. 38:2; Job 6:4) Along with lightning, thunder and famine, it was employed as a symbol of divine judgment. (II Sam. 22:15) As a metaphor of the penetrating power of truth the arrow symbolized the word of God. David refers to "sharp" arrows in hearts causing men to yield to "the sceptre of righteousness." (Psa. 45:4-7) In the same figure the bow stands for fidelity and strength, as in Gen. 49:24, and Psa. 44:6. In the hand of the rider of the white horse the bow was the symbol of all these characters of conflict.

*A crown was given unto him:* This is a significant description as it is noteworthy that Vespasian who initiated, and Titus who executed, the Jewish war both received the imperial crown.

*He went forth conquering, and to conquer:* The conquest of Christ was not spontaneous, intermittent or spasmodic; it did not consist in single victories; it was a continuous, progressive conquest of hearts which no might could defeat.

## 2. The red horse (second seal)—6:3-4.

"When he opened the second seal . . . 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 kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword."

The color of each horse corresponds to the mission of its rider. In the symbol of colors *red* stands for bloodshed; the rider was the persecutor waging war against Christ and his church. This rider had *power*, and political authority, to *take peace from the earth*. This symbolized the dwelling place of the nations. The statement that they should *kill one another*, meant the war of the Jews against Jews, their own flesh and blood kindred. This phase of events was described in Matt. 24:10 in foretelling the Jewish persecutions, the hostilities of the unbelieving Jews against their Jewish kinsmen who professed faith in Christ.

*And there was given unto him a great sword.* To the rider of the red steed of bloodshed and war, a *great sword* was given, in contrast with the bow, signifying a closer,

bitter, relentless and bloody struggle. It was an intensified view of the events in successive symbols.

The sword has connotations of both civil authority and military might. Even when it is used as a metaphor for the word of God it is a function of war against sin in the soul and the rebellion of the heart against the will of God. (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12) Moses used the sword as a metaphor of war. "I will punish you for your sins, I will bring the sword upon you," (Lev. 26:24-25), which meant that God would cause war to come upon them. "Ye shall be delivered into hands of enemies," he said. Paul used the sword to signify the authority of government. "For he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Rom. 13:4) God has ordained the rightful power of government to punish evil-doers and defend the good. Jesus used the sword to symbolize capital punishment. "Put up thy sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt. 26:52) They that take the sword by their own authority, assuming unto themselves the prerogative of vengeful justice, deserve to be put to death by the sword of authority. It is stated in Gen. 9:6: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." That was and yet is the universal law of requital.

The *great sword* given to the rider of the red horse was not the sword of government, but the sword of persecution. It was a "great" sword in significance, the survival of the church was involved, the gospel was at stake. It was great in extent—the whole Jewish and Roman world were drawing the sword against the church. It was a great sword in effect—resulting in the martyrdom of the followers of Christ, who would not yield to the coercion of conscience, when their testimony for the truth was sealed by the blood of witnesses; who trusted to the power of the truth, against the sword of persecution, for the success of the cause of the Lamb; and for the universal expansion of Christianity through the blood of its adherents.

### 3. The black horse (third seal)—6:5-6.

"When he had opened the third seal . . . lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his

hand . . . a measure of wheat for a penny . . . three measures of barley for a penny . . . hurt not the oil and the wine."

The *black* horse was the color of distress, the portent of terror in the approaching calamity. It compares with the Old Testament figure in Joel 2:6: "The people shall be much pained, all faces gather blackness"; and in Nahum 2:10: "The faces of them all gather blackness"; and in Jer. 8:21: "For the hurt of my people am I hurt, I am black." Jude 13 refers to the "blackness of darkness forever." It is the picture of the grim, dread calamity of famine in the land. The *balances* in the hand of the rider were scales and measures and indicated the scarcity in the land; the strict and small allowance of food to be issued by minute measure or exact weight with legislated care. It compares with Matt. 24:7, where Jesus foretold the famine that prevailed during the siege of Jerusalem. The *voice in the midst* of the *four beasts* (or beings) was in repetition of the voices heard in the visions, and impressed the hidden source of the revelations, adding to the portentous element of its apocalyptic character. The sound of this voice came from the midst of the four beings; hence, from within deep recesses of the throne, since the beings were in the midst of the throne; it was a voice of solemn authority, requiring reverence and heed.

*The measures of wheat and barley for penny* were according to the standard of the time. A measure of wheat was equal to approximately one quart. The *penny* is a translation of the Greek *denarius*, which the Bible Dictionaries say was equivalent to fifteen or twenty cents, and represented a regular full day's wages. The price for a measure of wheat, or a quart, in this vision amounted to a whole day's wages, and was therefore an extortionate price, the payment of a full day's work. (Matt. 20:2) Three measures of barley were less than a gallon for a day's wages, which indicates the extreme scarcity in the usually common and plentiful sources of food.

The command to *hurt not the oil and the wine* was addressed to the rider of the black horse, holding the scales and measures, not to suppress the oil and the wine. The *oil* was an extract from olives and spices, having many uses



in both the Old and New Testaments. It was used in the preparation of food (Ex. 29:2; Lev. 2:4); for illumination, or lamps (Ex. 25:6; Matt. 25:3); for medicinal remedies (Isa. 1:6; Mark 6:13); for a divine confection in the various legal and religious ceremonies and appointments. (Ex. 30:25; Ezek. 28:14). The use of oil signified joy; the omission of it was a token of sorrow. (Psa. 92:10; II Sam. 14:2; Matt. 6:17) The *wine* has been the subject of sundry and divers views, based on variations of the Hebrew and Greek words; but it is a well known fact that the characteristic common to all wine is that of an exhilarating beverage. Its misuse is severely condemned in both testaments and in some cases and places expressly forbidden.

The word is used to denote abundance of temporal good things (Gen. 27:28-37); and as a type of spiritual blessings (Isa. 55:1); and as alleviation of trouble and sorrow (Prov. 31:6).

In the vision of the red horse, the voice commanded the rider not to hurt the oil and the wine, not to limit or ration the oil and the wine; though famine would dissipate all other commodities, oil and wine would be undiminished. It was evidently the symbol of the providential alleviation of suffering and mitigation of sorrow—with oil and wine he would bind up their wounds. It was the voice of promise *in the midst of the living creatures*, from within the throne, that the ransomed of the Lord should come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing would flee away.

#### 4. The pale horse (fourth seal)—6:7-8.

“When he had opened the fourth seal—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.”

The color of *pale* was the symbol of *death*. This seal is specifically called a death procession, but was not a martyr scene. It signifies death by the destructive forces of the sword (war); of hunger (famine); of death (pestilence or disease); and of wild beasts (devoured or ravished).

By the *sword* as the instrument employed by the rider of the pale horse to accomplish his work of destruction he is represented as having *power to kill*. It symbolized the weapon of war waged against Jerusalem. *Hunger* is the blight of famine, and is descriptive of the mass starvation that prevailed during the siege of Jerusalem. *Pestilence* is the terror of death by ravishing disease, which also prevailed in the destruction and siege of Jerusalem. The *beasts* of this symbol do not refer to wild animals, as usually considered, but to cannibalism, as men turned beasts to ravish and devour each other and even to eat the flesh of their children. It occurred during the siege of Jerusalem, according to Jesus in Matt. 24:6-8 and according to the eye witness accounts of Josephus and Pliny.

It is declared that *death and hell* followed the rider of the pale horse. The word is *hades*, and refers to the domain of death, the realm of the departed, the unseen world of disembodied spirits, the subterranean abode of the dead. There are important distinctions in the uses of hell in the old English text. To translate *Gehenna* and *Hades* in the same word hell has had the effect of obliterating the difference between the place of eternal torment and the temporary abode of the dead. Since the descent of Christ into Hades, as described by the psalmist David, in Psalms 16:10 and by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:29, no one prepared for the eventuality of death need fear entrance into this realm nor the passage through it. He who "was dead and is alive," holds "the keys of death and hades," and from that fear he delivers us. (Heb. 2:14)

The rider of the pale horse was death, and hades was his companion—it *followed with him*. They were joined together as associates in the dark and ghastly mission of grim Reapers, in the role assigned to them in these seals.

To Death and Hades was given *power over fourth part of earth*: To the rider Death, and his colleague Hades, this power was given by the four creatures; it was the authority to kill by the means named—war, famine, pestilence and ravishment over *the fourth part of the earth*. The earth is the place of the nations in the vision; and this assignment is made by the fourth beast in the fourth seal, to the fourth

rider, of the fourth horse, and his division of work was a fourth part in this pageant of devastation. Elsewhere in the scenes are found the expressions *third part* and *tenth part*, apparently intended as proportionate figures of the vast destruction, but without geographical or mathematical significance.

The scene of the four horses and riders is a panorama of the war on Jerusalem in a fourfold set of events, an extension of twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. They represent one set of events, not separate figures for separated periods or ages of the world, such as war in one age, famine in another century, carnage in another generation, and with a final fantastic millennium in the end of the world. It is a combined series fulfilled in one period as foretold by Jesus in Matt. 24:34. The conquest of the victorious rider of the white horse through the bow could not be accomplished without the war on Jerusalem. The red horse of war could not perform without the black horse of famine, or without the pale horse of death in immediate pursuit. To separate the seals by centuries of time is to destroy the entire imagery.

The records of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, concerning Jerusalem, are counterparts of the seals of Revelation. The works of Josephus on the Palestinian wars give historical fulfillment in the account of the bloody war of the Jews and the siege of Jerusalem. The historical parallels in the history of the Roman empire by Edward Gibbon is a virtual commentary on the book Revelation, in the portion covering the period of the Roman war against Jerusalem. Truly, these things must have shortly come to pass, and verily was the time at hand.

### (3) Souls under the altar (fifth seal)—6:9-11.

“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: 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 fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

The *scene*: Here is the first glimpse of the martyrdom pageant which was reopened in the twentieth chapter with the grand finale of victory. It is the tribulation of Matthew twenty-four in extended form, an enlargement of Matthew 24:9 and Luke 21:16; depicting the supreme sufferings of those who were companions "in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," during the apostolic age, in the wake of the war on Jerusalem and the persecutions of Christians.

The *altar*: The material altar was a structure appropriated exclusively to the offering of sacrifices. (Gen. 8:20) Spiritually it is applied to Christ as the Christian's altar upon which spiritual offerings are made. (Heb. 13:10)

The *souls of slain*: In this martyr-scene the victims were sacrificed on the altar of the cause of Christ for which they were offered or slain. The word *slain* is connected with the offering of victims (Acts 7:42); and is descriptive of Christ (Heb. 13:10-12); and of the Lamb in chapter 5, verses 6, 9, and 12 of this vision. John saw *souls* of the slain. In the Old Testament the blood, which was the life (Gen. 9:4), was poured at the base of, or under, the altar (Lev. 4:7); and it stood for the offering of life which is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). The souls of this altar scene are represented as the sacrifices of life in the aggregate *slain for the word of God* as the victims of *the testimony which they held*.

The *souls under the altar*: As the figurative altar of this vision signifies martyrdom, the phrase *under the altar* describes the scene of defeat. The cause for which they were offered was represented as being despised and defeated. But it was temporary, because the same souls were removed from beneath the altar of chapter 6, and elevated to the thrones in chapter 20, signifying the resurrection of the cause for which they had died, by the victory of the white horse and its rider over all the portents of the seven seals.

*They cried with great voice:* It was the voice of righteous blood rising up to heaven, to be heard throughout the whole earth, as the blood of Abel cried to God “from the ground” (Gen. 4:10), and representative of “all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of Abel,” to include the blood of all the slain and martyred victims of the impending persecutions, all of which was predicted in Matt. 23:35; Matt. 24:9, and here depicted in the fifth seal of Rev. 6:9-11.

*How long, O Lord how long:* The word “lord is variously applied to kings, (Dan. 1:10; Acts 25:26); to rulers with authority (Dan. 2:10); to princes and nobles (Dan. 5:1; Mark 6:21); to tyrants (Isa. 26:13); to a husband (Gen. 18:12); to masters (Jno. 15:15); to Jesus Christ, as Lord of all (Psa. 110:1, Acts 10:36); and to God, who is over all (Psa. 100:3). It is used in this scene as a master, the *ownership* of a servant; and refers to God.

This prayer of the martyrs is addressed to God for judgment against persecutors, asking here for what they received in the scene of Rev. 20:4.

*Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood:* This was not a vindictive outcry, but a judicial petition, calling on the Judge of all the earth, whose prerogative it is to exercise avenging judgment (Rom. 12:19), and who surely will “avenge his own who cry unto him.” (Luke 18:7-8)

*On them that dwell on the earth:* The earth of these visions is the place or location of nations; it is not a reference here to the people of the earth, upon whom no vengeance was asked, but specifically those persecuting nations personified in their rulers. Compare Zechariah 12:9; Matthew 24:29-31 and Luke 21:25-28, in specific reference to the post-destruction period of Jerusalem—the redemption and the retribution of history presents a convincing parallel on the period of the Revelation visions.

The *white robes* were an assurance of victory—chapter 9:7; 13:7. The word *rest* means to *wait* in patience and hope—Luke 21:19, 28. The expression *little season* (time) limits the period, and compares with Matthew 24:22, “ex-

cept those days should be shortened"; also Luke 21:22 on the "days of vengeance." The time was extended to include that part of their *fellow servants and brethren that should be killed* in the later successive events. There could be no premature act of divine interposition. It *should be fulfilled* according to seals—that is the events of the vision completed. Again, the apocalypse is parallel with Matt. 24:34: "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled"; and Matt. 23:36: "All these things shall come upon this generation"; and Luke 21:22: "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."

The identity of the period of the seals of Revelation 6 with the events of Matthew 24 is unmistakable, as referring to, symbolic of, and fulfilled in, the destruction of Jerusalem.

(4) The shaking of the nations (sixth seal)—6:12-17.

"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. 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 bondman, 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?"

The judgments depicted in this seal indicate a response to the plea of the souls under the altar in the fifth seal. The representations, symbols and language are so similar to the descriptions of Matthew 24:29-31 as to be identical in their significance. It describes the coming of the Son of

man after the tribulation mentioned in the verses before it, as the sixth seal of Revelation 6 joins with the contents of the fifth seal before it. The divine visitations in the signs of terrestrial upheavals and celestial disturbances form an identical imagery. The comparison is impressive, if not conclusive evidence of their fulfillment in the same series of events.

### 1. There was a great earthquake—6:12.

In all of these scenes the earth is the place of the nations. The earthquake is the symbol of revolution, the shaking up of the nations in their various places. It is the figure of the agitations, upheavals, resulting in the revolutions and wars of Matthew 24:29. It is the symbol of divine judgment on the nations persecuting the cause of the Lamb.

The same signal of the earthquake is found in the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah 29:6, in the former judgments on Judah and Jerusalem. It has the same adaptations and similar applications, in Matt. 24:6-7, describing the wars in the tributaries of Rome and all over Palestine, Galilee, Samaria, 177 A.D. 66, preceding the destruction of Jerusalem.

### 2. The sun black, the moon blood—6:12.

These exact metaphors were employed by the prophet Isaiah to signify the darkness that was then to settle over the Babylonian people in the destruction of their city, Babylon. (Isa. 13:10) The same figures of speech were adapted by Jesus to describe the end of the Jewish state which resulted from the destruction of Jerusalem, and of their theocracy in the demolition of the temple. (Matt. 24:27-29) The figurative description is appropriated in the sixth seal of Revelation as a preview of the divine visitations on the persecuting powers.

### 3. The stars of heaven fell unto the earth—6:13.

The downfall of Jewish authorities, rulers, and officials of government is here symbolized. The same signs are used in Isa. 13:10 in the prophetic description of the fall of the Babylonian rulers. The princes and nobles of the Babylonian

kingdom were called stars in Dan. 8:10, and were said to be "cast down"; and in Dan. 12:3 God's people were said to shine "as stars forever."

4. As a fig tree casting untimely figs when shaken by mighty wind—6:13.

The fig tree was the most familiar fruit bearing tree of scripture illustrations. The first pair clothed their nakedness with fig leaves. (Gen. 3:7) The universal benefits of the new covenant were envisioned by Malachi as "every man under his vine and under his fig tree." (Mal. 4:4) The desolation of Nineveh is compared by Nahum to the ripe fig falling from the tree that is shaken. (Nahum 3:12) The dissolution of the enemies of God's people is described by Isaiah to the leaf falling from the vine and to a falling fig from a tree. (Isa. 34:4) The rejection of the Jews was insinuated by Jesus in the cursing of the fruitless fig tree. (Matt. 21:19)

So the maledictions about to fall upon the persecutors of the Lamb's followers all symbolized by the casting, or forcible falling, of figs from the tree "when she is shaken of a mighty wind"—the wind of divine wrath. Isaiah compares the withholding of divine judgments against Ephraim as the staying of "his rough wind" (Isa. 27:4); and Jeremiah prophesied that a "full wind" would come upon Jerusalem, "not to fan, not to cleanse," but as a judgment to execute "sentence against them." (Jer. 4:11-12) So this apocalyptic seal makes the casting of the fig from the tree, "when shaken of a mighty wind," a portent of the destruction that was reserved for the persecutors of the Lamb's people.

5. The heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled—6:14.

The word *heaven* here refers to the seats of government, the powers of dominion. The persecuting powers would *depart*, fold up, as a scroll, and roll back. Using the same figure in describing the fall of Babylon, Isaiah said "the host of heaven shall be dissolved and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll." (Isa. 34:4)



The disintegration of the enemies of the church was also foretold in the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah by the use of the same figures as John employed in the imagery of Revelation; and it is again comparable to the Lord's pronouncement concerning the events after the fall of Jerusalem, that with a great sound of a trumpet, he would send his messengers to "gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"—(Matt. 24:31)—a description of expansion of the gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem and the downfall of Judaism. And in verse 34 the Lord said with the emphasis of *Verily I say unto you* that "this generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled." Here is the blanket proof that these events belonged to that time, that they pertained to the church and the nations of the persecution period and not to a distant future of far and remote centuries.

6. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places—6:14.

This is another symbolic expression to designate the divine visitations on the persecuting powers. Figuratively the mountains denoted places of authority in a kingdom (Amos 4:1), and the powerful concentration of enemies (Isa. 41:15). The island denotes the inhabitants of the sea, from over the sea, or any land bordering the sea; and the prophets referred to the Gentile peoples as the "isles of the Gentiles" and "isles of the sea."

In the imagery of this sixth seal *mountains and islands*—both Jewish and Gentile persecuting authorities, Palestinian and Romans—would be overthrown, *moved out of their places*, their power dissipated. Pronouncing judgment on Tyrus for oppressing Jerusalem, Ezekiel said the isles would "shake" and "tremble" at her fall and "all the isles of the sea shall be troubled at thy departure." (Ezek. 26:15-18) So of these Jewish and Gentile authorities "after the tribulation of those days." Jesus said "the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." (Matt. 24:29)

7. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men . . . said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us

from the face of him that sitteth on the throne. . . . For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"—6:15-16.

This is a quotation from Hosea describing the men of high places—kings, nobles, warriors, captains and conquerors—all of whom were to be humbled with men of low station, calling to the mountains for cover. In pronouncing doom on Jerusalem Jesus quoted Hosea 10:8, as recorded by Luke: "Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me but weep for your children. For behold the days are coming . . . they shall begin to say to the mountains 'Fall on us'; and to the hills 'cover us'."—(Luke 23:28-30)

Since the quotation in 6:16 and Luke 23:30 are from the same prophecy of Hosea 10:8, it is the Lord's own application of its fulfillment in those events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem, and it is therefore solid evidence which cannot be controverted that the seals of Revelation are not now future.

8. For the great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand—6:17.

As the previous verse is a direct quotation from Hosea, this last verse of the sixth seal is an allusion, if not a quotation, of Nahum 1:5-6: "The mountains quake at him, the earth burned at his presence . . . who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide his fierce anger? His fury is poured out . . . the rocks are thrown down by him."

The Revelation passages are connected by quotation and the meaning is evident. The appeal of the great and mighty was for covert from the face of Him that sat on the throne and from the Lamb who was in the midst of the throne, which means that both God and Christ joined in the events of visitation in this pageant of retributive judgment on the nations. It places the passage where it belongs, not to the final judgment nor to a future procession of events, but to the period of the struggle and triumph of the early church with and over the Jewish and Roman persecutors of the apostolic and post-apostolic period.

(5) The intermission scene (between sixth and seventh seals)—7:1-17.

Six seals have been opened, revealing the signs of impending events. The first four seals depict scenes of terror and tragedy never exceeded in the course of human history—the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, the details of which fulfill these visions of the horrorifying inflictions, of its duration, and of the subsequent tribulations in its wake. It should not be even momentarily overlooked that all of these calamities were included in the narration of Matthew 24, accompanied by the explicitly plain announcement by Jesus that the calamities would come upon that generation and fulfilled in it (Matt. 23:36; Matt. 24:34). “All these things shall come upon this generation.”

After the disclosures of war, famine, pestilence and mortality in the pageantry of the four horses and riders, the fifth seal discloses the call of the martyrs for avenging judgment, followed by the answer of the sixth seal to their cry in the symbols of the descending wrath of the One on the throne and of the Lamb upon the persecutors and their accomplices.

The immediate opening of the seventh seal would expectedly follow, but instead an interlude is projected into the vision as an enlargement of the martyr scene, expanded to include their “fellowservants and brethren,” previously mentioned as “partakers in the tribulation” yet on the earth.

This recess between the sixth and seventh seal signifies a lapse between the announcements of judgment and the execution of them, and corresponds to the period of escape promised the disciples by Jesus, in Matt. 24:15-25 and Luke 21:18-19, in his descriptions of the siege of Jerusalem; and it was fulfilled in the withdrawal of the Roman armies, under the command of the Roman general, Titus, after the siege had commenced. It is described by Josephus, an eyewitness to the embattled scenes of the destruction of Jerusalem, with additional evidence from the Roman historian Pliny, to which further reference will be made in the following analysis of this interlude and its succeeding scenes.

## 1. And I saw four angels—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.”

The *four angels* were the imperial agents, not the heavenly messengers, as shown by the contrast with “another” angel of verse 2, which countermanded the orders of the four angels to hold back the winds. These four angels were the agents of Rome intercepting the word of God—*holding the winds*—hindering the messengers of the gospel—that *they should not blow*—that is, preventing the spread of the gospel, or Christianity. The old word “hold” meant “hinder,” as in Rom. 1:18, “who hold (hinder) the truth.” The *four corners of the earth* is a common expression to denote the four points of the compass, meaning the whole earth. It signified the universal sway of the Roman government, hence, the significance of “the four angels,” the Roman agents “standing on the four corners of the earth,” exercising dominion over the whole world. The *four winds* were the messengers of Christ to execute his will, signified by the wind blowing, contrasting “blow” and “not blow,” the affirmative and negative opposites. The phrase, *on earth, sea nor tree*, were the three things that sum up physical objects against which the wind blows, and signify that the acts of the four angels in holding back the wind proscribed the preaching of the word, and in so doing the result was universal, having effect on all peoples of the earth.

The designation *on the earth* referred particularly to Palestine where the Jews resided and where the gospel originated. The designation *on the sea* extends the restraining order to other parts of the world separated by the sea from the land of the Jews. The statement *nor any tree* emphasizes that the word of God was being restrained everywhere men were found.

## 2. And I saw another angel—7:2.

“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."

Here is the symbol of the heavenly messenger who suspended the restraining order of the four angels—*Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God in the foreheads*. This angel was seen *ascending from the east*, from the eastern horizon, from the direction of the rising sun, a symbol consistent with his mission of suspending, or preventing, the mandate of the four angels to put out the light of God's word over all the world. By the authority of God the angel of the east said to the four angels *hurt not the earth*. It had been "given" to the four angels to "hurt" the earth, by the war on Jerusalem, and to enforce the mandate that "the wind should not blow," that is, to restrain the word of God.

### 3. Hurt not the earth—7:3.

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

This was the counter command of the angel of the rising sun to the four angels. The purpose of this *sealing*, as later seen, is to preserve the holy seed, the true Israel of God, from the judgments about to come upon the earth. It was not exemption from suffering, but from the judgments about to be announced in the opening of the seventh seal. It was a suspension period before the break of fury, signifying the divine protection of the faithful seed, the assurance that no force could bring them ultimate harm.

The *sealing in their foreheads* was a symbol of an insignia or a mark to save them from slaughter, but not from tribulation, for chapter 2:10 said "thou shalt suffer tribulation ten days." But they would survive it; they would be preserved in the midst of it, by a mark to distinguish the true Israel, the holy seed, from old Israel, the fleshly Jew. The old Israel was soon to perish, the new Israel to be preserved; the old Jerusalem was soon destroyed by impending judgments, the new Israel to be sealed for preservation, to survive and flourish as Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,

the church of the firstborn, sealed on earth and enrolled in heaven. A similar imagery is employed by Jeremiah in foretelling the captivity of Israel in Babylon. (Ezek. 9:4) Its history repeats itself in these visions of tribulation in the final destruction of Jerusalem, and of Israel's nation.

It is noteworthy that in this imagery there was the mark that sealed the servants of God *in their foreheads*, who *worshipped* not the beast, in contrast with what was later called *the mark of the beast*, also received *upon their foreheads* and *in their hands*, by those who submitted to the beast—to the decree of the emperor against the worship of the Lamb, and for the worship of the emperor, as set forth in the second series of symbols surrounding the church the Bride of the Lamb. In a similar figure Paul carried the mark of his Lord. (Gal. 6:17)

The *number of the sealed* was computed with the tabulation of twelve times twelve, on the basis of the twelve tribes instead of the twelve apostles, as in chapter 4; but here it is expanded to the basic number of thousand for each tribe, as a full and complete company rather than persons equal in number to the patriarchs and apostles, as in case of the twenty-four elders. In the first the symbol was *added*; in the second it was multiplied. It signified the whole faithful church, the total number of the redeemed, "the holy seed," preserved from the pronouncements of judgment. This multiplied number was mentioned again in chapter 14, discussion of which is reserved for that exposition.

In the names that head the twelve tribes, Judah stands first, significant of relation sustained to "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" from which the Lord sprang. (Heb. 7:14)

The spiritual, figurative, use of the twelve tribes elsewhere in the New Testament designated the whole church, the spiritual Israel, as in the Old Testament they represented the whole of fleshly Israel. (Matt. 18:28; Acts 26:7; James 1:1)

This 144,000 *of all the tribes of the children of Israel* was an apocalypse *of the holy seed* of Isa. 6:13; and *the remnant of Jacob* of Isa. 10:21-23; and *the remnant according to election* of Rom. 9:27-28; 11:5; and *the innumerable company* (the church) of Heb. 12:22. They stood for the

new Israel. The proclamation of "the angel of the east" to the four angels standing on the four corners of the "earth" to "hurt not the earth till we have sealed the servants of our God," signified that God would not permit them to destroy Old Jerusalem until he had sealed a representative number for the New Jerusalem, the church, which was figuratively said to be "the twelve tribes" of the dispersion. (James 1:1)

The "loud voice" of this angel commanded that the "wind blow," that the gospel should be preached to the *four corners* by the *sealed servants*. It was parallel to the Lord's declaration that after the destruction of Jerusalem his *angels* (emissaries) would carry the gospel to the *four winds*. (Matt. 24:31)

Following the visions of the sealed number there was the heavenly scene of the great multitude robed in white, coming out of tribulation, composed of the angels, the elders, and the beings, who were before the throne; who were washed in blood; who served in his temple; who hungered and thirsted no more; who should suffer no heat of the sun; whom the Lamb should feed and lead; and whose tears God would wipe away.

The full or unlimited understanding of all the signs with a precise explanation of all the symbols of these visions is not required in order to know the general import, and application to the period of these persecutions. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the objects of these visions were immediate and present with them while they are separated and remote from us. It should further be observed that there were spiritually gifted teachers in each church to impart the meanings to the members, whereas we have the teaching of the text itself, with the current history of the context, to follow. The course of history did not run contrary to the context nor does the language of the text contradict the events of history. The misinterpretations of false teachers and the misapplications of others arise from the anachronisms of assigning these events to the wrong periods of time, by referring them to future centuries, rather than applying the signs to the impending events of the time.

The correlation in the symbolic arrangement of the contents, without the historical gaps and the fragmentary dislocations of the future theories identify them with the current history then transpiring. The entire genius of the book justifies the conviction that it was designed for the comfort and encouragement of the early apostolic churches.

#### 4. The innumerable multitude—7:9-10.

“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.”

In this coordination of the apocalypse, the angel's proclamation concerning the hundred and forty-four thousand was immediately followed by the heavenly scene in verses nine to seventeen. The vision here expands the hundred forty-four thousand *of all the tribes of Israel*, as the nucleus of the New Israel, *the holy seed, the remnant according to grace*—into the innumerable multitude. The revelation does not end with “the number of them that were sealed” in verse 4.

Verse 9 continues the vision with the words “after this I beheld and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues.” It is the same company as “the number of them that were sealed,” the hundred forty-four thousand which were “of all the tribes of Israel.” But the multitude in verse 9 were *of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues*,” which signified that the new Israel was not the fleshly seed of the twelve tribes of Israel; but the spiritual seed—*the holy seed*—of all nations “which no man could number.” This was the symbol of innumerable multitude. It was identical with that “innumerable company” mentioned in Heb. 12:22-23, designated “the general assembly and church of the firstborn.” It identified the hundred forty-four thousand of Rev. 7:4, and Rev. 14:1, with this *great multitude* and *innumerable company* of Rev. 7:9 and



Heb. 12:22-23. So parallel are these passages that strong evidence is adduced from it that the Hebrew passage is an allusion to this Revelation scene of chapter 7, virtually equivalent to a direct quotation. This is assuredly possible in the premises of the prior date of Revelation, in which chronology it antedates the Hebrew epistle. The same evidential relation of other epistles to the apocalypse is indicated in other references and examples, all of which are internal evidences that Revelation is by no means the last book of the New Testament canon, but quite to the contrary—it bears an earlier date than several others, including Hebrews, Galatians, Second Peter (if not first), and even of the other epistles of John.

The multitude of verses 9-10 were clothed in the *white robes* of victory, displaying *palms* of praise. There were the emblems of a triumphant march. (John 12:13) With *a loud voice* the vocal unison of the great company ascribed *salvation to our God*, from whom the salvation proceeded and *unto the Lamb*, by whom it was procured.

This salvation was not in the gospel sense of salvation from sin or in pardon or remission of sins, but was the state of deliverance and blessing. The Greek texts give the article which the English translations dropped, and in them it reads: “the salvation of our God,” a specific reference to coming out of the trials of persecution into the scenes of the throne.

##### 5. The angelic proclamation—7:11-12.

“And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”

In the acknowledgment of this salvation all of the angels were standing *about the throne and about the twenty-four elders and the four creature-beings*. Together encircling the throne they prostrated their angelic forms before it, and said *Amen*, to the voice of the multitude which had ascribed salvation unto God and unto the Lamb.

Reference to "all the angels" does not mean all angels in heaven, but all the angels in this vision, beginning in the fourth chapter. After saying *Amen* to the acknowledgments of salvation by the multitude, they repeated the doxology of chapter 5:12, with the exception of the omission of "riches," inserting *thanksgiving* and substituting *might* for "strength." For comments on the seven-fold attributes thus ascribed to God and to the Lamb refer to chapter 5:11-13.

#### 6. The white-robed throng—7:13-14.

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

The interrogative of verse 13 brought the answer of verse 14 and identified the multitude as the survivors of tribulation. It was an advance scene and corresponded to "the hour of trial," chapter 3:10; the "tribulation" of chapter 2:10; and to the Lord's language in Matt. 24:21, after which he would gather his elect "from the four winds, and from one end of heaven to the other"—verse 31. The preservation of the true seed of Israel, the success of the cause of Christ, the victory of the church, and the universal sway, of Christianity in the expansion of the gospel, were the parallels in all of the visions; and they covered in each instance the same events, and alike defined the period of these afflictions. The apocalypse belonged to that time.

The company which emerged from tribulation were described as having *washed their robes* in blood. This was not the washing away of sins in baptism, of Acts 22:16; nor the washing of water by the word of Ephesians 5:26; nor having our bodies washed with pure water of Hebrews 10:22. It was the washing of their *robes*—it was the blood bath of tribulation, symbolically in the blood of the Lamb who Himself shed his blood for the cause for which they also suffered.

## 7. The reward of the redeemed—7:15-16.

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

These who were *before the throne of God and in his temple*, renewed the dual kingdom-priesthood character of the church, it is said of both in chapter 1:6, 5:10. The demolition of the old temple only gave place to the new (Acts 7:47-49); and his priests then would serve in his temple *day and night*, and would be always *before his throne*, continually with none to make them afraid; and their God would dwell there. (2 Cor. 6:16)

In this new temple-state, having emerged from tribulation, they should *hunger* and *thirst* no more; neither *sun* nor *heat* would *light on* them (afflict them)—figures of speech to denote the calamities during the period of persecution as symbolized in the seals. The *famine*, *pestilence* and *plagues*, which prevailed during the period of persecution would all cease. The absence of all of these signified a state of victory over persecution.

## 8. The living fountains of water—7:17.

“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.”

These figures of speech signified that their tribulations were over. They were avenged by the overthrow of their persecutors. Henceforth the Lamb would *feed them*; the opposite to the symbols of *want* in tribulation. He would *lead them unto living fountains of waters*—no longer amid the dangers of the persecuting powers, but where provender, peace, refreshment and satisfaction were unrestrained. It is the apocalyptic version of the twenty-third psalm.

Finally, the ultimate in the symbols of victory: *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*—the persecutions had ended, the tribulations were over. Here the visions and

scenes all merge into one company, the victorious church of Christ.

(6) The silence period (seventh seal)—8:1-6.

“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. 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 thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”

The disclosures of the seventh seal consist in the signals of the seven trumpets, announced in the order of events by the seven angels. The trumpets sounded the beginning of the end of Jerusalem, of the Jewish temple, of Judaism and of all that constituted the Jewish state. It signaled the end of the world of Matthew 24:3, and 24:14—not the inhabited world, but the Jewish world. As the seven trumpets of Jericho, borne and blown by the seven priests, signaled the fall of the Canaanite city standing in the way of Israel’s conquest (Josh. 6:13-21), so did the seven trumpets, sounded successively by the seven angels of Revelation, signal the fall of Jerusalem. They signaled the end of the once “faithful city, turned harlot” (Isa. 1:21); “the great city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt where also the Lord was crucified” (Rev. 11:8, 13). It was the end of the apostate Jerusalem which stood in the way of the conquest of the gospel; the Jerusalem that refused the “testimony” which the martyrs under the altar of Revelation 6:9 had “held”; the word of God which the same enthroned souls of Rev. 20:4 had “witnessed.” It was the Jerusalem of Gal. 4:25-26, which was “in bondage with her children.”

The old Jerusalem was doomed to destruction before the advance of the "Jerusalem above" of Gal. 4:26, and "heavenly Jerusalem" of Hebrews 12:23, and the "new Jerusalem" of Rev. 21:1—the church of the new covenant, the "holy city" and "temple" of the Christ who was the Lamb of Revelation.

When the angel opened this seventh seal, before the momentous announcements were heard, a dread and awful silence was recorded.

1. "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."—8:1.

This scene was in Heaven: It was the place where all of these correlated visions were disclosed. The "silence" here was accentuated by the contrast with the "voices" in the six seals before it. It was the silence of dreadful suspense, fearful expectation, a calm before the storm.

The silence period was for the *space of half an hour*: It was the symbol of pause, the sign of shortness of time. A similarity exists between this silence and the cessation of singers and trumpets in the cleansing of the temple by Hezekiah when the king and all the congregation "bowed themselves and worshipped." (II Chron. 29) The silence here followed in immediate succession the scene of chapter 7, where all the angels, elders and beings "fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God." The similarity between the cessation of the singers and the silence of the angels was impressive. The former was a cessation of reverent worship, after the "singers sang" and the "trumpeters sounded" at the altars of Hezekiah. The latter was a silence of waiting awe, after the voices of "all the angels" in chapter 7 had ceased; it was a silence significant of what was about to occur in the final scene of the seventh seal.

2. "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets."—8:2.

The angels were the announcers; the trumpets the signals for what had been announced to begin. It followed the vision of "the day of wrath" in the sixth seal, and was a

further vision of judgments, of things “shortly” to come to pass, which had been set forth in the six preceding seals. The trumpets of the seventh seal were the signals to proceed to the accomplishment of that which the seals signified.

3. “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 prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne”—8:3.

The altar was a place of sacrifice; the throne was a mercy seat. The angel stood at the altar before the throne to join with those who prayed.

The angel offered much incense . . . *with the prayers of all the saints*—This more than usual incense had a significance—the additional incense was because of the prayers of *all the saints* in contrast with the prayers of only those saints which were *under the altar*—of chapter six. It was added to the prayers of *the great multitude* of chapter 7, in behalf of the comparatively few souls of saints under the altar. This *superadded* prayer in which the angel joined was the same in character and purpose with the prayer of the martyrs in chapter 6:9, for the Lord to “avenge” their blood. The martyrs had been told to *rest*, or wait, until the time (see 6:9-10). The time was about to be signaled, the prayer was about to be answered, joined by *all* the saints, superadded by the angel; that for which they were to be avenged, for which they were told to wait, was about to be done—it was ready to be executed.

4. “The smoke of the incense which came up with prayers of the saints ascended up before God, out of the angel’s hand”—8:4.

The smoke ascended in acknowledgment of the prayers being heard, recognized and received at the throne. The incense ascended to God *out of the angel’s hand*, which was the sign that the answer to the prayers of all the saints, joined with the cry of the souls under the altar, would be forthcoming.

5. "The angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake"—8:5.

The same *fire* that consumed the incense would speedily destroy the enemies of the saints, and the apostate city of Jerusalem, and the temple of Judaism. The fire-filled censer was *cast into the earth*.

As previously shown "the earth" signified the place of the persecuting powers. The censer filled with the fire of the altar was "cast into the earth" as an act to cause explosion—and the result was symbolized by *voices, thunderings, lightning* and an earthquake. This was the fourfold sign of the judgments ready to come, gathering as a storm approaches with thunderings, and the earthquake signified the shaking of persecuting powers. The four angels and four trumpets were four signs that these events were about to break in fury.

6. "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound"—8:6.

The procession of events was ready to begin.

(7) A summary of the seven seals.

Chapter 6:1-2—seal one: The *white* horse and the rider pictured Christ the Conqueror, the invincible Lord—the Victor.

Verses 3-4—seal two: The *red* horse and the rider stood for bloodshed, the symbol of the color *red*, representing the persecutor waging war against the church, and the Jews against their own flesh—the unbelieving Jews versus those who professed faith in Christ—an extension of Matt. 24:10.

Verses 5-6—seal three: The *black* horse and the rider represented distress and calamity, the sign of the color *black*, signifying here the dreadful famine in the land, in the signs of the balances and the scales, an enlargement of Matt. 24:7.

Verses 7-8—seal four: The *pale* horse and the rider, the color of death, but it was not martyrdom. It was the scene

of carnage, of deadly pestilence, with all the ravishing conditions which prevailed during the siege of Jerusalem, foretold in Matt. 24:6-8.

Verses 9-11—seal five: The souls under the altar were the martyrs *asking* for the avenging judgment they were later seen *receiving*, in chapter 20:4, where the same souls, beholden in martyrdom, under the altar of chapter 6, were enthroned in the victory of chapter 20—a further fulfillment of Matt. 24:9.

Verses 12-17—seal six: The *earthquake* was a symbol of the shaking of the persecuting powers in the predicted upheaval, of revolt, and of wars, in fulfillment of Matt. 24:29, in signs of the blackening sun, the falling stars, and the scrolled heavens—all of which were the portents of the destruction of the existing persecuting powers which were concluded in the scenes attending the day of wrath to come upon them, and described in the closing verses of chapter six.

Chapter 7 describes the intermission or recess after the sixth seal, in a vision of the *hundred forty-four thousand*, the number of the sealed of all the tribes of Israel, which represent the totality of the spiritual seed, the New Israel, the whole faithful church, of chapter 14.

Chapter 8:1-6—seal seven: After this seal was introduced it was momentarily suspended by the silence period before the break of fury in the signals of seven trumpets.

### III

## THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

(Chapters 8:7-9:21)

When the silence of the seventh seal ended, seven angels stood ready, with seven trumpets, to signal the commencement of the series of judgments, woes and plagues.

The descriptive language employed in the revelation of these trumpet signals and woes was parallel in character



and substance with Luke's record of the startling signs and the astronomical terrors which the Lord told the disciples would be fulfilled before that generation passed away. (Luke 21:25-26) There is no way to dissociate the record of Matthew and Luke foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem from the visions of Revelation.

(1) The earth smitten—(the first trumpet)—8:7.

“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.”

1. The *hail, fire, blood, cast upon earth*. These descriptions were symbols of devastation. The earth, as in previous signs, denoted the place of the powers (Ezra 1:2), and here applies to the Jewish powers (Rom. 9:28), as the comparison with the records of Matthew and Luke have verified. It is the trumpet of devastation on the land of the Jews, and of judgments on the *land beast*, the Jewish persecutors.

2. The *trees and green grass*. These symbols signified that the plague of devastation affected *the earth* and all that was naturally of it, or the total destruction of that *part* of the nations represented by the Jewish powers. The meaning of a *third part* was based on the three woes, one part for each woe of devastation.

(2) The sea smitten—(the second trumpet)—8:8-9.

“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; 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.”

1. The *burning mountain*. The mountain was used to signify a powerful monarchy, as in Amos 4:1—and the *mountain burning with fire* in this symbol signified that the powers which hindered the church were seething in the fury

of preparation for attack and destruction. The same imagery is used of Israel's powerful enemies in Isa. 40:1; 41:5. In this vision of the tribulations which were so soon to overwhelm the church, the burning mountain symbolized the lust of war, and it was descriptive of the Roman and Jewish persecuting powers.

2. The *mountain cast into the sea*. The great burning mountain was seen in the vision as being *cast into the sea*. The Roman emperor was symbolized as *the beast of the sea* and was represented as coming up *out of the sea*; and this symbol evidently signifies that the government which would wage this war against the church would be the empire and its tributary powers.

3. The *smitten sea*. As *earth* referred to the Jewish powers in the land of the Jews, the *sea* signified the Roman powers. The *smitten sea* meant the destruction of the power of the *sea beast*—the Roman persecutors ceasing to make war against the church. The creatures of the sea died and the ships were destroyed; all of which were symbolic descriptions of the broken powers of persecution.

(3) The rivers smitten—(the third trumpet)—8:10-11.

“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; 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.”

1. A *great star from heaven*. The falling star, as in Matt. 24:29, Mark 13:25 and Luke 21:25, represented the downfall of authorities and rulers of the persecuting governments—*falling as it were a burning lamp*, or torch, as a spent meteor of the heaven, falling from their former power and dominion. The same imagery was in Isaiah's description of the fall of the Babylonian rulers; the constellations were used as the symbols of their positions, and the same figures of speech were used by the prophet as metaphors

of the darkness that settled over the empire in the destruction of ancient Babylon. "The stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened . . . and the moon shall not cause her light to shine . . . and I will punish the world for their evil and the wicked for their iniquities." (Isa. 13:10-11)

The Babylonian "world" and its rulers were the objects of the punishment in this passage. The same familiar symbols are employed by Jesus in the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and by John in the visions of Revelation, foretelling the ruin of Jerusalem, the doom of Judaism and the downfall of their rulers.

2. And it *fell upon rivers, fountains of waters*: The smitten rivers are the representations of the drying up of the source of the existing powers. The *fountain* is the source of a stream; the *river* is the channel of its flow. When the persecuting powers were smitten *the fountain of waters* dried up, and the river of their power ceased to carry the evil flow.

3. *The waters became wormwood and many died because they were made bitter*. Wormwood was the name of a plant, distinguished for intense bitterness, and used to denote anything offensive and nauseous. The use of it to designate either food or water was a sign of extreme suffering. In this connection the name of the falling star was called *Wormwood*, for the bitter effects accompanying the downfall of the powers here symbolized, which attended the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. It was so revolting that even the mental picture of the physical putrification turns to nausea, the bitterness of which only wormwood could signify. Matthew's record says "for then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. 24:21) Mark's record reads: "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be." (Mark 13:19) Luke tersely says: "For there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people." (Luke 21:23)

(4) The sun smitten—(the fourth trumpet)—8:12-13.

“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. 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!”

1. The *sun, moon and stars*: The blackout of the sun, the moon, and the stars, the darkness of the day and even the denseness of the night are the signs of the stark distress and pall of gloom descriptive of the fourth stroke of the trumpets, in the darkness that settled over the Jewish state and nation.

The four trumpets have sounded a cycle of judgments, land, sea, rivers and luminaries, a complete sphere of symbols, envisioning descending distress and tribulation, suffering and sorrow, in signs comparable to the calamities of the seals in the symbols of earthquakes, famine, pestilence and carnage. All of these visions announced with profound proclamations of the trumpet symbols that the time of these terrors was at hand.

2. *Angel flying midst heaven*: Here is an angel differing from all others of the visions before this scene. This *flying* angel was the imagery of the eagle, and flying “in the midst of heaven,” was symbolic of a swift messenger of warning to the existing powers of the quickly coming calamities.

3. *Saying with a loud voice*. The voice of this angel was loud, not in sound, but in meaning—a great voice, a portentous message of immediate importance, revealing its imperative character. The angelic voice vibrated with the intonations of woe—“woe, woe, woe”—in awful refrain to enhance the gravity of the pronouncements.

4. *Other voices . . . yet to come*. It was “by reason” of three trumpet pronouncements to follow that the flying

angel called his woes. The fearful plagues of the four trumpets that had sounded were only a start in the succeeding terrors. The "other voices" were the messages of the angels of the remaining trumpets "yet to come," which was the "reason" for the flying eagle of woe.

In the series of seven trumpets, four had sounded, three remained. The woes of "the other voices" of the three angels and trumpets "yet to sound," in their respective turns, held forebodings "to the inhabitants of the earth" beyond all that had been theretofore depicted.

The "inhabiters of the earth," does not mean all the people in the world. The "earth" has been defined as the place of the powers to which reference is made and is limited by such reference. Accordingly it sometimes denotes the place of the Jewish powers only, but in other instances both the Jewish and the Roman powers, as the context of the attending signs and pronouncements show.

Until now the visions have surrounded Jerusalem, Judaism and the Jews, and the seals and trumpets have revealed and signaled the events that betoken the "end of the world" to them—the Jewish world—the destruction of their state. This is undoubtedly the significance of the expression "end of the world" in Matt. 24:3. On this point Mark records that four of the disciples (Peter, James, John and Andrew) asked Jesus privately, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled" (Mark 13:3-4). In the threefold account of the same event, the end of the Jewish world, and the attending signs, Matthew, Mark and Luke join in saying the generation to whom he was speaking should not pass "till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. 24:34); and "till all these things be done" (Mark 13:30); and "till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21:32). It is noteworthy that the three inspired narrators emphasize *all* the things set forth in the signs would reach their fulfillment in that generation. Matthew lends even greater force to the already unequivocal statements by his statement in chapter 23:33, "Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." By no manner of means can such forthright language be circumvented. Men may

talk and write about it but they can neither write nor talk around it.

It is so with the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets, the relation to the destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism, and the end of the Jewish state is too evident to be controverted.

With the "loud voice" of the flying angel, therefore, alerting the "inhabiters of the earth," the Jewish world, to the crescendo of woes in the "other voices" of the trumpets of the three angels "yet to come"—the vision increases in the forebodings of what was characterized as "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Lk. 21:26)

In the grim contemplation of eventualities the hearts of men would fail. And of those very indescribable occurrences, in the successive events connected with the siege and desolation of Jerusalem, there is indisputable evidence to sustain their historicity.

(5) The smoke of the pit—the fifth trumpet)—9:1-12.

"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 was 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. 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."

1. *A fallen star*: I saw a star fall from heaven"—9:1.

The *star*, as in previous instances where the symbol is used, denoted a ruler; and *heaven* in this connection, as also previously shown, denoted the dominion of these powers. When Jesus said in Luke 10:18, "I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven," he meant the complete defeat of all the personified agents of Satan. By his fall *from heaven*, Jesus meant that Satan would be dethroned from his exalted dominion; and his downfall would come swiftly *as lightning* in the shaping conflict.

When the prophet said of a Babylonian ruler, in Isa. 14:12—"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer (brilliant star), son of the morning; how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations"—it referred to the downfall of the ruler, personified as Lucifer. The name *Lucifer* in the Septuagint, is translated "Star," which was represented as falling from heaven—the wicked king's exalted place of dominion.

The figure is no different in this Revelation vision. The star is personified in the persecuting ruler. He was designated "a star fallen from heaven" for the wicked character that he exemplified in the descension from his exalted place of rulership to the satanic plane of a perfidious leader of impious forces. The star falling "from heaven unto the earth" merely denoted the descent of the ruler from an exalted dominion to a degenerate place of activity among the powers of men.

2. The *key to the bottomless pit*: “And to him was given the key to the bottomless pit”—9:1.

The “bottomless” pit is the abyss, the infernal region, the diabolical domain of the devil. This fallen star being an agent of Satan personified, he was given the “key” to the abyss of Satan, that he might unloose the woes announced by the flying angel of chapter 8:13.

The *smoke of the pit*: “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—9:2.

The pit is the infernal underworld, the dark abode of demons (Luke 8:31). Here the angel has the “key” to open it—*unloose* it—hence, an evil angel, in contrast with the angel with the “chain” in chapter 20, to *bind*.

The smoke of the pit “as a furnace,” similar to destruction that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:28), the smoke of a pit sending forth effects of pollution and contamination.

*Darkening the sun and the air*: This was not the eclipse of the sun as in previous symbols, but the veiling of the sun “by reason of the smoke of the pit.” Here also instead of the sun and the moon being darkened, as before, it is the *sun and the air*.

As noted under the classification of symbols in the preview, the *air* is the symbol denoting the sphere of life and influence. As the blackout of the sun symbolized the dark distress that hovered over the land, the blackened air, “by reason of the smoke of the pit,” signifies with the same vividness the corruption of the whole sphere of life by this figure of the complete pollution of the air by the smoke of the infernal pit.

*Locusts upon the earth*: “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”—9:3.

In Bible times the word *locust* was applied as widely and as loosely, it seems, as the word *worm* in our various uses. But in scripture apocalypses, both Old and New, the refer-



ence is to a large and vile insect of such multiplicity and voracity as to be a dreaded source of scourge. These insects borne by the wind in swift swarms hundreds of miles were known to the people of Palestine as "burners of the land," a phrase derived from the literal meaning of "locust." It was their nature to be together, flying in vast numbers, spoiling the grain, infecting the part they did not eat, and poisoning the very air through which they swarmed. A scourge of locusts ended with the decomposition of several millions of the vile things, and resulted in pestilence that afflicted the land, with heavy death toll. (Joel 2:20) One historical example is on record as occurring 125 B.C., when the swarms were driven by strong winds into the sea, and washed back by the tide in such vast numbers as to cause a stench and a plague from which several thousand people died in the countries of Libya, Cyrene and Egypt.

From the time of Moses they were the instruments of divine judgment as in Exodus 10:4-15; Deuteronomy 28:38-42; I Kings 8:37. The prophet Joel makes this locust the figurative instrument of fearful visitation in his vivid description of the devastating march of the Assyrian armies through the land. (Joel 2:9, 10, 11.)

It is this symbolic locust, swarming from the smoke of the abyss as a scourge "upon the earth," that is employed in the vision here, to signify the woe being pronounced by the angel of the fifth trumpet upon Jerusalem and the land of the Jews. By the same symbol Joel described the invading armies of Israel's Old Testament history (Joel 1:4-6)—a striking parallel.

3. *Unto them was given power as the scorpions of earth:* The scorpion is described as a small venomous reptile (Deut. 8:15) having a bladder full of poison. Its anatomical description gives it two eyes in its mid-head, and another two eyes toward its extremity; with two arms like claws, eight legs with six talons each; a long tail like a string of beads, with two stingers full of poison, which it squirts into the object of its sting. This creature is used in the scripture figuratively to denote the wicked who torment the good. (Ezekiel 2:6) Jesus used it as a figure in

promising his disciples power over every evil thing or agent that Satan could employ to their hurt (Luke 10:19).

In the present vision of chapter 9 the locusts from the abyss were “given” the power of the scorpions of the earth—signifying the affiliation of all the evil forces of the infernal underworld to be personified in the characters of wicked rulers.

*Hurt not grass, green thing, tree:* “And it commanded them not to hurt the grass, or the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads”—9:4.

In chapter 8:7 the signal of the first trumpet was in the judgement against the land, symbolized by that which was in nature of it. But this first woe of chapter 9 does not have the destruction of the physical powers as its object, but the spiritual.

*But only those who have not the seal:* The “sealed of God” were the true disciples whom the scorpion power was commanded not to hurt; and it corresponds with Luke 21:25-28, “Look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.” Matthew describes in chapter 24:15-30, the escape of the disciples; and so does Luke in chapter 21:18.

*Should not kill:* “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 it striketh a man—9:5.

The victims were not put to death—the descriptions of the siege of Jerusalem.

*But tormented five months:* This referred to the literal period of time for the season of locusts, from spring to autumn (May to September), but here it figuratively denoted the full time, the whole period for the effects described, designating figuratively the period of the siege.

*Torment as of a scorpion when he strikes man:* The baneful effects of the siege on its victims had figuratively all of the sting of the scorpion’s tail—sorrow, suffering, famine, pestilence, carnage, stench and putrefaction, indescribable. Vivid description of these deadly carriers of the scourge of pestilence and putrefaction are narrated in dic-

tionaries of antiquities and historical works, such as Josephus and Pliny.

4. *Seeking death*—"In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it"—9:6.

For comparison read Luke 21:26, Matthew 24:22, and Mark 13:12, 20—the Lord's own predictions concerning these events. There could be no fitter application of these symbols than the tragic conditions attending the siege of Jerusalem, as described in the graphic language of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

5. *The horse-like locusts*. "And the shapes of the locusts were like the shapes of horses prepared for battle"—9:7.

*Shapes like horses*: The composite appearance of the locusts—shape of horses for battle, heads as gold crowns, faces of men—shows this symbolism to be that of the rulers with their armies of destruction. The locusts were seen as horses "prepared for battle," as the horses in cavalry battalions.

*Heads as crowns*: The heads of the locusts were seen as "crowns like gold" signifying that they were the armies of the Roman generals Vespasian and Titus, both of whom were given imperial crowns, in connection with their invasions of Judea and the siege of Jerusalem.

*Faces as faces of men*: The faces of the locusts, as men, identifies the symbolism with the imperial armies invading "the holy land" as swarms of locusts. It is not a new form of apocalypse at all. The prophetic vision in Joel 1:1-6; 2:1-4 was the description of the invasion of the land of Judea by the armies of the north (1:6; 2:20), as a baneful swarm of locusts, having both animal-like and human-like forms—"The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen so shall they run." These visions of Joel, and of other pre-exile prophets, foretold the fall of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar, having besieged the city, shut its inhabitants within the walls, inflicting upon them all the horrors of famine, pestilence and war, eventually burning the temple and its buildings, razing the walls, and

reducing the city to rubbish and ruin—all the dreadful horrors of which were depicted by both Jeremiah and Joel.

As the prophet Joel's apocalypse of the invasion of locusts concerned the Jerusalem of about B. C. 600, this vision of John's apocalypse concerned the Jerusalem of A. D. 70, when Vespasian and Titus executed the imperial orders of Nero to besiege and destroy the city, the miseries of which exceeded all of its calamitous history before and after.

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that desolation is near . . . for these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Luke 21:20, 22.

"For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Matthew 24:22.

"For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation, which God created unto this time, neither shall be." Mark 13:19.

The cumulative evidence is preponderant that John's visions encompass the invasion of Judea and the fall of Jerusalem described by Jesus in the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

6. *The locust features:* "And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth as the teeth of lions"—9:8.

*The hair of women:* The kind of insect forming this vision was that of the hairy species referred to in Jeremiah 51:27 as "rough caterpillars," or the "cankerworm" of the Revised Version, but is admittedly the variety of the devouring locust with a sort of bristling long hair. The comparison with the hair of women is because of the feature that draws attention, as the waving hair, the abundance of which is the woman's natural glory—John 11:2; 12:3; I Corinthians 11:14-15. It is used as a figure to impress the personality of the locust creatures of this vision.

*The teeth of lions:* The same figure is used in Joel's vision of the army of locusts, which signified that "a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek

teeth of a great lion.” (Joel 1:6) It is a symbol of strength, as the frequent expression to put *teeth* in legislation, and is designed to personify the locusts of this vision.

7. *The locusts of war*: “And they had breast plates as it were of iron”—9:9.

*Breastplates of iron*: The breastplate is the armor of war. Its figurative use here is sufficiently obvious, showing the symbolic locusts to be men of war, and the whole scene descriptive of the Vespasian march on Jerusalem. The locusts were seen as haberdashed with breastplates of iron, as if shielded by the Roman soldier’s impenetrable coat of mail, encompassing the vital portions of the body. The figure of “iron” connected with breastplate denotes the irresistible force of the armies of invasion.

*Sound of wings as chariots*: The whirling of myriad wings of the locusts were in sound as the wheels of bustling chariots and hustling horses racing to battle. Here again John joins Joel in the imagery of war in their respective visions of the locusts. Describing the Chaldean armies as swarms of locusts in their march on Jerusalem B.C. 584, Joel said: “The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains shall they leap . . . as a strong people set in battle array.” The locust visions of Joel and John are parallel—the former describing the Old Testament war of Nebuchadnezzar on the Jews, the latter the Neroan war of A. D. 70 on Judea and Jerusalem. Joel referred to the locusts as “people set in battle array,” or battle formation. John referred to the locusts as “chariots running to battle.” The parallels and the applications are unmistakable.

8. *The Power to hurt*: “And they had tails like scorpions, and their power was to hurt men five months.”—9:10.

*Tails like scorpions*: This is a reemphasis of verse 5 with extended detail. These were unusual locusts, showing that they were figurative, not literal. The locusts had tails like scorpions—unlike the serpent that coils and strikes with the head, the scorpion strikes with its tail. The usual

length of the scorpion was about two inches, but large scorpions of the deadly species exceeded six inches. Its sting produced violent convulsions, excruciating pain and death. In this vision it symbolizes the deadly striking power of the invading army.

*Power to hurt five months:* In verse 5 the expression is "tormented five months"; here it is "power to hurt men five months." The season of the locust was from late spring to early fall of the year, May to September in our calendar. The expression five months, being the whole season of the locust, figuratively denotes the activity of the persecuting powers through the period of tribulation without surcease.

9. *The king of the pit:* "They had a king over them which is the angel of the bottomless pit"—9:11.

*A king, angel of bottomless pit:* The king "over them"—over this ferocious locust army, was the angel-king of the abyss; he was Satan personified in the persecutor. As in later chapters (12:9-12; 20:2) the dragon-beast, the old serpent, "was called the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world," the king of this army of the abyss was Satan himself, represented in the persecuting power. Undoubtedly, Paul has reference to the persecutor when in Romans 16:20 he said, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

In early chapters reference was made to the "synagogue of Satan" (2:9); "Satan's seat" (2:13); and the "depths of Satan" (2:24). The epithet itself means adversary, enemy, accuser. It comports fully with the symbolism of these visions that Satan, angel-king of the abyss, should be personified by the persecutors in this vision.

*Abaddon, Apollyon:* The Hebrew word *Abaddon* means "destroyer." The Greek word *Apollyon* means the same. The word Satan means "adversary," but in this vision the *adversary* was given power to *destroy*. Verse 9 above says the power was "given." Jesus said to Pilate: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." (John 20:11) By reason of this power of destruction personified, the angel-king Destroyer

(Abaddon—Apollyon) was so designated. It was most *apropos* to so entitle the impious leader of such a monstrous army of horrid creatures of the abyss, to thus liken the literal emperor of the Roman world to the figurative king of the underworld.

The depths of Satan is the boldest delineation, the personification of whom code language alone could allow, as in a later chapter it was again done in the name and number of the beast. And to so label this monarch of oppression a despot; the *destroyer* in both of the two spoken languages—Abaddon and Apollyon, the Hebrew and Greek—was a challenge to boldness which must have excited courage and inspired fortitude in all the suffering saints.

10. *The woes*: “One woe is past, behold there come two woes more hereafter”—9:12.

In 8:13 the flying angel announced three woes to enhance solemnity. Now, it was John speaking, not the angel, not the eagle, not one of the elders, nor one of the creatures, but John. As if to mark by count the three woes announced by the angel in chapter 8:13, in recording tones John said: “One woe is past: and, behold there come two woes more hereafter.”

A restrospective comment is in order here on the meaning of the expression “third part” in the beginning of fifth trumpet—verses 7, 8, 10, 12—finds explanation in the three woes, each announcement of the angel representing a third part of the whole realm of the woes.

(6) The loosing of four angels—(sixth trumpet)—9:13-21.

“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. 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 mouth, 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."

The symbolism of the sixth trumpet like that of the fifth, is a parallelism of imagery with Joel's vision of horsemen and chariots surging in battle. The symbolism is the same because the events envisioned are of the same character, the one pertaining to the war of the Chaldeans against the Jerusalem of Joel's era, the other to the war of the Romans against the Jerusalem of John's era. The visions carry the same import, and hence present the close similarity in the figures of horses, heads, tails, and of armor and chariots and embattled armies.

1. *The four angels*: "A voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God . . . saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, saying, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates"—9:13-14.

*A voice from four horns*: The voice here is that same voice of authority "in the midst" of the throne of chapter 6:6. Not the voice of any one of the angels, creatures or beings of the scene, but the voice from within, "in the midst" of them all. It emphasizes the source of all divine revelation, from within the throne itself. Here, in the sixth trumpet vision, the voice came from the four horns of the altar—four horns, but one voice proceeding from them. There were four angels, in chapter 7:1, "holding the four winds of the earth." The same four angels were in this



scene of chapter 9, and there were four horns on the altar—a horn to convey a divine message, an order, to each of the four angels; but the one voice from the four horns signified one message—the same for all. The horns were of the altar “which was before God,” so the voice from the horns was the voice of direct authority from God. The voice was not personified, as of an angel, or any representative, but was simply designated a voice of direct command from the altar “before God” to the angel of the sixth trumpet.

*Loose the four angels:* As the voice from the altar of this scene is the same voice from within “the midst” in chapter 6, so the four angels here are the same four angels “holding the four winds of the earth” in chapter 7. The four angels there, as explained, were the imperial angels or agents holding the winds that they should not blow: that is, hindering the messengers of the gospel, preventing the spread of Christianity. A heavenly angel, referred to as *another angel*, countermanded the orders of the imperial angels, restraining them from the performance of their mission “to hurt the earth” by holding back the four winds—the messengers of Christ—and the four imperial angels were commanded by this angel to “hurt not the earth.” Now, the voice from the altar “before God” commanded the angel of the sixth trumpet to “loose the four angels.” The suspension period designated as time to “seal” or to preserve “the holy seed,” the true Israel, the symbolic number of one hundred forty-four thousand, had been accomplished, and it was time for the four angels to proceed.

Again, the scene was comparable to the promise to the faithful disciples of time to escape the siege of Jerusalem, and the flight from the city was described in all three records of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Josephus records that after the siege had begun for some unknown reason Vespasian withdrew his armies to such distance and for such time for the flight of the disciples from the city to the mountains to be accomplished. It is a remarkable parallel to this scene of Revelation 7, where the angels of destruction were ordered to wait “till we have sealed the servants of our God,” and a suspension was signified in this vision

as that recorded in the accounts of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, the fulfillment of which according to Josephus is historical.

The command to "loose" these angels of destruction was in contrast with the command of chapter 7:2 which restrained, or bound them. That these four angels were bound is further evidence that they were evil angels, the angels or agents of destruction "standing on the four corners of the earth," poised to blast Jerusalem with destructive horror, and in consequence blight the earth by "holding the four winds," preventing the promulgation of the gospel to its four corners.

*Bound in the great river Euphrates:* The Euphrates river is named in Genesis 2:13-14 as a fork of the river of Eden. Moses called it "the great river" in Genesis 15:18 and Deuteronomy 1:7. It was designated by the Lord to Moses as the eastern boundary of the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 11:24, and restated as a part of the promise to Joshua after the death of Moses (Josh. 1:4). It was the border by which David established his dominion (I Chron. 18:3), when he went in conquest to recover that part of Canaan lost to the savage neighbors of enemy nations. (II Samuel 8:3)

In Psa. 137:1-3 the Psalmist said that by the river Euphrates the Israelites in captivity wept. In no less than two dozen scripture passages it is called "the river," indicating both geographical, historical and biblical importance. From the regions of this river the Assyrian and Chaldean armies had in the past swept over the land of Israel like an overwhelming flood. (Isa. 7:20; 8:7-8; Jer. 46:10; Hab. 1:6-11)

The symbolical allusion to "the great river" in this sixth trumpet scene has a two-fold significance. First, the four angels were said by the voice to be *bound* in, or at, the river Euphrates. To be *bound* means to be held at the border of the land. The Euphrates being the border, the four angels of destruction had been countermanded for the time; hence, bound "in the great river Euphrates" at the port of entry to the land doomed to their destruction. Second, the ruler

of the Euphrates region was symbolically called the "rod" of wrath and anger, and the "staff" of indignation sent against "an hypocritical nation." (Isa. 10:5-6)

The sixth angel was therefore commanded to "loose the four angels which were bound at the great river Euphrates," as the symbolic allusion to the indignation and destruction poised at the borders to sweep the land and overwhelm its inhabitants. To literalize it serves only to destroy the imagery, and in so doing the apocalypse itself, as is so usually done when literal constructions are placed on symbolical things.

2. *The cavalry legion*: "The four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, a day, a month, a year, to slay third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them"—9:15-16.

*The four angels loosed*: The voice in verse 14 commanded the angel of the sixth trumpet to loose the four angels. In verse 15 the sixth angel obeyed the voice, "and the four angels were loosed" to go unrestrained to execute the mission suspended in chapter 7:3.

*Prepared, hour, day, month, year*: It is noted that "an" hour is the article "the"—it is *the* hour, used with *hour* only, not with day, month and year. Hence, "*the* hour and day and month and year" denoted the suspension time, the period of intervention, during which these four agents of evil were "prepared"—their armies massed for attack, waiting for the time of chapter 7:3 to be over, and for the directive, in military parlance, to unleash the armies, the dogs of war.

*To slay the third part of men*: The sounding of the trumpets was accompanied by the announcement of three woes. With the fifth trumpet, John interposed that "one woe is past, and behold there come two woes hereafter." (Verse 12) In chapter 11, verse 14, John interrupts the vision again to say "the second woe is past, and behold the third woe cometh quickly."

In chapter 9 the apocalypse envisioned the armies of the Euphrates under the imagery of swarms of locusts number-

ing *twice ten thousand times ten thousand*. It was a figure of overwhelming military might that descended on Judea and Palestine. The apocalypse presented a two-fold catastrophe: 1. the tormenting locusts which brought the demonic plagues; 2. the armies of the Euphrates which brought the demonic wars. The swarms of locusts were said to *hurt men*; while the armies of the Euphrates were said to *kill men*. The two-fold vision of destruction symbolized *famine* and *sword*. The first part of the vision *to hurt men* was accomplished in the ravages of pestilence by famine; the second part of the vision *to kill men* was executed in the devastations of war by the sword. The terrible atrocities of the armies of Titus, Cestius Gallus and Vespasian, were recorded in the historical annals of eye-witnesses, who saw the armies overrun Judea and who witnessed the fall of Jerusalem, such as Josephus and Pliny; and in the works of the near-contemporary historians, Tacitus and others.

Since the judgments contained in the trumpets are divided into three woes, each directive is accordingly applied to "a third part" of the mission, which expression is repeated with each extension of the sixth scene. In the chapter 6, verse 8, where the judgments were symbolized in the opening of the seals, the division was called "the fourth part of the earth" in contrast with "the third part of men," in chapter 9, verse 15. The division of the parts is made proportionate with the pronouncements of judgments or woes. The scene consisted of a series of four judgements in chapter 6 and of three woes in chapter 9; hence, "the fourth part of the earth" and "the third part of men" proportionately.

*Two hundred thousand thousand*: At this point the vision transforms "the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth . . . to whom it was given to hurt the earth" into the immense army of two hundred thousand thousand, or twice ten thousand times ten thousand, which counted literally would compute the figure of two hundred million. This was not a numerical count of the conscripts composing this army, but the symbolic description of immensity so overwhelming as to make human resistance impossible.

*And I heard the number of them:* The number of this mighty army was proclaimed to John, not in visionary form, but as being audible—"I heard the number." It was another interposed statement, as of verse 12, containing the overtones of an overpowering onslaught.

3. *The apocalyptic horses:* "And thus I saw the horses in the vision, having breastplates of fire, jacinth, brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone."—9:17.

*Thus I saw . . . in the vision:* In the manner of the narrative John "thus" saw these things—that is, not in physical life, not actual or real, but "in the vision"—therefore, it was not a description of fleshly animals, material armor or human riders, but symbolic of the woes to befall the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the land of the Jews.

*Breastplates of fire, jacinth, brimstone:* In verse 9 the army of locusts had breastplates of iron, to signify an impervious shield. Here "them that sat" on the horses, the horsemen, and "breastplates of fire, jacinth and brimstone" denoted the glittering colors of the bedecked armor.

*Jacinth*, known also as hyacinth, resembling amethyst (Exodus 28:19; 39:12), was an opaque stone consisting of crystallized quartz, a gem of dark blue-violet or purple-like color; the oriental amethyst belonging to a variety of sapphire mentioned frequently in the Old Testament; an ancient gem of brilliance and beauty, next to the diamond in lustre and hardness.

*Brimstone* was a sulphuric mineral substance of inflammable potency and yellowish hue, the fumes of which were odious and suffocating. It is figuratively employed in Job 18:15; Isaiah 36:9; and in Revelation to symbolize the terrible condition of suffering and punishment, temporally or spiritually, pertaining to both the present and the future state.

*Fire*, aside from its natural uses, was variously used in both Old and New Testaments as a metaphor of divine presence, as a purifier of intense emotion either of love, anger or hate, of the execution of penal judgment on men

and nations and of the future eternal punishment of the wicked, all of which uses are figurative and carry the full intensity of the word in all of its connotations and applications.

The "fire, jacinth and brimstone," of verse 17, were used to figuratively describe the iridescent glitter of the horsemen's armor, in the glowing red of fire, the blue-purple hue of the hyacinth, and the smoky yellow of brimstone. The blending colors signified also the mingled sufferings to be inflicted with the awful intensity of fire and brimstone, as indicated by the corresponding expression in the same verse, that "fire, smoke and brimstone" proceeded from the mouths of the horses. The vision of two hundred million horsemen bedecked in armor of fire, jacinth and brimstone, riding horses with heads "as the heads of lions," with mouths issuing "fire and smoke and brimstone," presents a monstrous picture of the approaching speedy execution of judgment on Jerusalem.

The figurative use of these terms as metaphors of misery and woe is unquestionable when compared with the context of the several other passages in which the phrase "fire and brimstone," and similar expressions occur.

In an imprecatory psalm against his enemies David said, "upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone . . . this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psalms 11:6)

Prophesying God's judgments upon Gog, Ezekiel said: "I will rain upon him . . . and upon the many people that are with him . . . an overflowing rain . . . hailstones, fire and brimstone." (Ezek. 38:22)

Describing similar judgments on wicked nations and their rulers, Isaiah said: "The Lord will come with fire . . . to render his anger with fury and his rebukes with flames of fire . . . for their worm dieth not, neither shall their fire be quenched." (Isa. 66:24)

The allusion here is to that accumulation of filth and putrefaction in the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, always alive with worms, and its everburning fires day and night, to consume these sources of pestilence. From "Hinnom" was compounded the word Gehenna, which the Lord

used to denote the word "hell." In the application of the figure to the torments of hell Jesus said: "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched"—Mark 9:44, 46, 48. The use Jesus made of these words cannot be applied literally to the torments of souls in hell any more than the language of David, Ezekiel and Isaiah could be applied literally to the rulers of the nations against whom they were inveighing. As a metaphor of eternal banishment from the presence of God, Jesus used the expression "outer darkness," like "outer space," a darkness beyond the physical darkness of this world. In reference to the misery of such banishment he used the phrase, "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." An amateur in exegesis should recognize the figurative character of these expressions. So it is in the use of the word "fire" to indicate the intensity of suffering beyond degree: "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched"—remorse is the worm and anguish is the fire—where remorse of conscience will never end and anguish of soul will never cease.

In an almost identical association of metaphorical phrases employed in the Psalms of David, in the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel and in the discourses of Jesus on Jerusalem, the visions of John employ the expressions "fire and smoke and brimstone" to describe the plagues of the four angels turned loose; and the atrocities which attended the invasions of their monstrous army were as smoke ascending from the fire of hell.

4. *The deadly plagues:* "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. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails"—9:18-19.

*By these three:* The three symbols of three atrocious plagues, fire, smoke and brimstone were a three-fold description of catastrophe and destruction in the terrors of the four angels loosed to hurt the land—"by these three was the third part of men killed."

*Power in mouth and tails:* A symbol of spreading destruction before them, "issued out of their mouths," leaving only devastation behind them, "for their tails were like

serpents,” and as the horses had heads like the heads of lions, their tails were not only like serpents, but their tails had heads like serpent heads. “*And with them they do hurt*”—that is, using their tails to do harm, with devastation from the rear as well as destruction that issued from their mouths. It is the description of the deadly scourge in the path of the invasion before this army and in its wake behind, sweeping everything before, leaving nothing behind; as a scorched earth and burnt land. It is an extension of the appalling picture of the complete desolation mentioned by Jesus, in Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20, which followed the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

The same description is given by Joel of the invasion of Judea by the Chaldeans in the sixth century B.C. “A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them and behind them a desolate wilderness.” (Joel 2:2)

Of this same invasion of Old Testament history, Jeremiah said: “And I will send . . . the king of Babylon . . . and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants . . . and will utterly destroy them . . . and make them an hissing and perpetual desolations . . . and this whole land shall be a desolation; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” (Jer. 25:9-11)

Numerous other examples could be cited but these are sufficient to show that when comparison is made between these historical visions concerning Jerusalem of the era of six hundred B.C. with the visions of John concerning the Jerusalem of A.D. 70, their application is not only obvious but unavoidable.

5. *The demon worshiper*: “The rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands—neither repented they of their murders, fornication, sorceries, nor their thefts”—9:20-21.

*The rest of the men*: This referred to the residual number specified to be survivors of this second woe, pronounced on “the third part of men.” They are described



as being guilty of the “worship of devils,” which covered all the idolatrous objects immediately mentioned—“which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk,” classified as “idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood”—all of which declared to be “the works of their hands.” To include all these categories of idolatry under the blanket indictment of “the worship of devils” was in keeping with the law of the Jews, which proscribed all idol worship as homage “unto devils,” and was branded as religious whoredom in the Mosaic law. “They shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute forever unto them throughout their generations.” (Lev. 17:7) Again, in the song of Moses it is said: “They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared (worshiped) not.” (Deut. 32:17) The apostle Paul upholds the Mosaic statute on that point, having himself lived under it as a Jew: “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” (I Cor. 10:20)

Those survivors here designated as “the rest of the men” were evidently that residue of Jewish people who were classed as adherents of Jezebel, and as holding the doctrine of Balaam in the letters to the seven churches (chapter 2:14; 2:20)—the apostate Israelites “of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie.” (Chapter 3:9)

Reference to the comments on these verses in chapters two and three will spare further discussion of the symbolic names of Jezebel and Balaam here. Because of her determination to exterminate the prophets of Israel and to sabotage the nation of Israel by idolatrous worship, her name stood for infamy among the people of Israel, and was used in the apocalypse of Revelation to symbolize the Judaizers in the churches. The name Balaam carried a similar symbolic connotation, because of that mongrel prophet’s seductive schemes to destroy the people of Israel by means of heathen practices. Thus the figurative phrases “the doctrine of Balaam” and “that woman Jezebel”

originated, as representative of that element in the churches "which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie."

In the present context the phrase "the rest of the men" apparently referred to that residue classed as adherents of Jezebel, and further identified with "the doctrine of Balaam"—chapter 2:14—"who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." The language of this vision describing those Jew-Israelites as practitioners of these prohibited things was largely an adaptation of the language of Isaiah in forecasting an extolling allegiance to the Holy One of Israel amid the idolatries of the nations: "At that day shall a man look to his maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the works of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images. In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation." (Isa. 17:7-10)

These "men" who avoided the plagues of the second woe were those Jews who were affiliated with those things defined in verse 20, and the parallel passages cited, and "repented not" of these "works of their hands"; but their escape from the tribulations of the woe did not secure immunity from the condemnation of disloyalty to the God who recompensed to all men their evil.

*Neither repented . . . murders, sorceries, fornication, thefts:* The category of evil things were the flagrant crimes of Jezebel, recorded in I Kings 21:14-15 and II Kings 9:22, and again connects "the rest of the men" of these verses with the Jezebel apostates. While the idolatries of verse 20 and the crimes of verse 21 were all in violation of both tables of the decalogue, they were not to be applied literally in this vision—their idolatries, murders, sorceries and thefts belonged to the spiritual category for which those sensual things stood. Abandoning Christianity for the praise of princes was as *idolatry*; deserting Christ to escape

malediction was *murder* of his Cause; turning from the principles of the faith to the arts of magic was a broad definition of *sorcery* (Acts 13:6; 19:13), of which there seemed to be a rather numerous party. (Col. 2:18-23) And *theft* does not consist only in the violation of the eighth commandment—seducing men was spiritual theft. (John 10:8-10; Matt. 15:9; Jer. 23:30; I Tim. 1:10) That *fornication* has a figurative as well as physical meaning goes without saying. (Rev. 2:21; 19:2; II Chron. 21:11; Rev. 17:5) Apostasy is spiritual fornication.

Thus "the rest of the men" is a phrase designating apostate Israelites, guilty of the entire category of spiritual crimes, of which they "repented not"—verse 20; "neither repented"—verse 21. This dual emphasis on the impenitence of these apostates was for the four things representative of apostasy both under the decalogue of Moses and the gospel of Christ.

First, *murder*: This crime exists in fact in the malicious act of taking human life (II Sam. 13:28; I Kings 21:19; Mark 15:7; Ex. 22:2-3; Deut. 18:9; Num. 35:27-31) It exists in principle in seeds of wrath, hate, retaliation, oppression, and all of its evil consequences. (James 4:2; 5:6; Rom. 1:29; I John 3:15) It exists in effect in vicarious sufferings, reproaches, and afflictions. (Psa. 44:22; Rom. 8:36; I Cor. 15:30-32; II Cor. 6:9; John 8:44; Job 5:2; Job 24:14) It was a flagrant, odious and abominable crime. For intentional murder there was no legal pardon, nor ceremonial remission. (Deut. 19:13; 21:9; Ex. 21:14, 28, 29; Num. 35:30-34) Figuratively, it represented a spiritual degeneracy of the emotions of love and loyalty which leads to betrayal and destruction of righteous causes and men. It is a fitting characterization here.

Second, *sorceries* or *magic*: This was a professional part of divination, described in Exodus 7:11; Deuteronomy 18:10; Acts 8:9; and Acts 13:6. It was a system of pseudo-divinity belonging to the dark demon world, as mentioned in Acts 16:16-18. It was an essential element in false religions and was held in opposition to the true religion of the Jews, as in Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14;

Jeremiah 14:14. It was prevalent among Jews, many of whom believed in it and resorted to it, as stated in Samuel 28:3-20. In whatever form it was regarded or practiced it was reproachful to the Mosaic religion and to Christianity, and was reprobated in both the law and the gospel. The writings of the prophets are full of invectives against Israelites who consulted diviners and of the false prophets seducing the people by means of it, examples of which are Jeremiah 14:14, and Ezekiel 13:6-7. Again, here was a fitting characterization of the Jewish apostasies.

Third, *fornication*: This is a term of frequent occurrence in all the sacred writings to denote acts of lewdness and of incontinency. It is used for the sin of impurity in I Cor. 6:13; 7:2 and Jude 7. It is used for the sin of adultery in Matthew 5:28-32 and I Thessalonians 4:3. It is used for the sin of incest in I Corinthians 5:1. It is used for spiritual and religious infidelity, apostasy from truth and right in II Chronicles 21:11 and Revelation 19:2. In the spiritual sense it denotes the unfaithfulness of the Israelites because the union between God and Israel was set forth as marriage. (Jer. 3:9; Ezek. 23:37; Isa. 23:17) Jesus upbraided a faithless God-denying and Christ-rejecting age as "an adulterous generation" in Matthew 12:39. The mingling of error and evil with that which was true and pure in teaching, worship and practice was spiritual adultery. It applied to participation in heathenism or affiliation with any false system or practice. (James 4:4) It was truly an apt use in this present scene.

Fourth, *theft*: The term here referred to the deceptions of any form of stealing. It was applied physically to the unlawful taking of anything that belongs to another, as in Exodus 20:15; Job 30:5 and Luke 10:30. It was applied morally, or ethically, to fraudulence, as in Matthew 21:13. It was applied doctrinally and spiritually to seduction, to seducers of doctrine, as in Jeremiah 7:9, 23:30; Ezekiel 13:10; I Timothy 4:1; II Timothy 3:13; I John 2:26 and Mark 13:22.

In this sixth trumpet scene these words are employed figuratively, not literally. It was spiritual murder, in the

sense of traitors to the Jewish cause, and betrayers of their brethren. It was spiritual sorcery in the magical influence exercised over the Jewish population. It was spiritual fornication in adulterous affiliation with the false systems of deism, pantheism and paganism. It was spiritual theft in the stealing of the truth from men's hearts and God's way from their lives.

The correctness of the characterization of the "rest of the men which were not killed by the plagues," and who "repented not" of the category of figurative crimes, as the residual number of the Jewish people, is supported by the corresponding Jewish history of the same period. The sins listed in the category of verses 20 and 21 were typical of all Jewish apostasies from the law of Moses promulgated from Mount Sinai and which was preached in all the synagogues. "Thou camest down upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments . . . by the hand of Moses thy servant." (Neh. 9:13-14) "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day." (Acts 15:21) But the residue of this nation were those to whom John said, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come," (Matt. 3:7); and whom Jesus called an "offspring of vipers" (Matt. 23:28-33). These were condemnations of which hypocrisy and iniquity made them deserving. Among them arose a legion of false prophets and seducers to lead them astray, particularly true in the very period of the calamities portrayed in the vision of these trumpet visions and of corresponding description in the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke on the destruction of Jerusalem. "And there shall arise false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24:24) "And they shall show signs and wonders to seduce." (Mark 13:22) "And ye shall be betrayed . . . and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." (Luke 21:16) Later, before these things came to pass that were thus foretold to mark the latter part of that period ending with the fall of Jerusalem, inspired apostles were issuing

warnings against all such seducers and their doctrines, with all the resulting wickedness. "Now the spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." (II Tim. 4:1) "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come." (II Tim. 3:1)

These apostolic admonitions correspond with the warnings of the Lord in the discourse on Jerusalem, and are descriptive of the same Jewish apostasies of the residual number in the closing scene of the sixth trumpet vision. The drawing of these parallels was in full accord with the teaching of the passages cited in reference to the times, with the history of that period, and with the purpose of the apocalypse.

The voice from the four horns of the altar commanded the angel of the sixth trumpet to "loose" the four agents which were "bound" in or at "the great river Euphrates" (verse 14) was the ominous announcement of encompassing desolation. It is a geographical fact that the Euphrates river formed the boundary of the Roman empire at the time of the Jewish-Roman war, and their army installations and concentrations were there where the legions of this vision were said to be "bound." It was therefore in harmony with all the facts, scriptural and historical that the mighty cavalry of the Euphrates portrayed in this trumpet was the immense Roman army which marched against Jerusalem and initiated the terrible siege resulting in all the desolation foretold by Daniel and depicted by the Lord in pointing up the fulfillment.

Matthew's account reads: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (whoso readeth let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee."—Matthew 24:15-16.

Luke's record reads: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Jerusalem flee to the mountains."—Luke 21:20-21.

Here Daniel's vision, in chapters 9 and 12 of his prophecy, were merged with the signs of the Lord's Jeru-

saalem discourse and with the like symbols of John's apocalypse. To search the distant future for a fulfillment of these symbolic descriptions, not only reduces both the text and the context of Revelation to confusion, but renders meaningless all of the passages which apply with such clarity and so full of force to that period. The interpretations which remove these events of the symbolic history from the Neroan period of the apostolic century, and assign them to centuries later and yet to come are rank anachronisms. Any attempt to explain these visions by the rise and fall of the successive monarchies, through the centuries from them till now and on to the end of time, would necessarily continue the existence of the armies symbolized in this vision for periods ranging from five to twenty centuries, which not only destroys all practical applications of the symbolic descriptions to the people to whom they were addressed, rendering them impossible to understand, but it furthermore declares an open season for the maneuvering, manipulation and juggling of events of history to fit a manufactured theory. But viewed in the light of the application of the symbols of Revelation to the period of time in which the people lived to whom the visions were addressed, all such anachronisms disappear.

#### IV

### THE MYSTERY FINISHED

(Chapters 10:1—11:19)

Here an interval in the immediate progression of the trumpet visions was introduced before the sounding of the last trumpet by the seventh angel. It was an intermission consisting in an order of intermediate episodes in the nature of correlative visions incident to an intervening period between the soundings of the sixth and seventh trumpets. This dramatized interlude conforms to the pattern of the apocalypse by the inter-relation with the interval of time between the openings of the sixth and seventh seals.

As there was a prolonged pause of ominous silence immediately followed by an interfolded revelation in the sounding of the trumpets before the final disclosures of the seventh seal, so preceding the final pronouncement of the catastrophe of the last trumpet there was an intermediate period of epic events.

(1) The seven thunders—10:1-6.

“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. 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. 5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven. 6 And sware 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.”

This angel *from heaven* here designated as *another mighty angel* is a reversion to chapter 5:2 where the first *strong angel* made the loud proclamation concerning the sealed book, asking “who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” Here in the hand of this second *mighty angel* is the *open book*, no longer sealed, or closed, the seven seals of it had also been opened and proclaimed—chapter 5:5.

1. *Clothed with a cloud*: This angel was wearing a cloud as apparel, or a garment, and was arrayed and encompassed with the phenomenal majesty of a heavenly messenger. He was invested with the credentials of divine authority, which his vestures symbolized. (Ex. 16:10; 33:9; Num. 11:25; Psa. 18:11; Matt. 17:5; Luke 21:27;



Rev. 1:7) This display was not for the execution of judgment, but rather to be clothed and attired with the glory befitting his portfolio and comparable to his commission. Compare the similar symbols of official robes in Exodus 40:34-38 and Leviticus 16:2, and the "woman arrayed with the sun" in chapter 12:1 of the next scene.

2. *A rainbow upon his head*: The rainbow is the symbol of divine covenant. (Gen. 9:12-17) It represented assurance against judgment, promise of help, a pledge of divine presence. (Ezek. 1:28; Rev. 4:3; 10:7) It was a sign that this angel was a messenger of mercy, not of judgment, bringing good tidings, not evil forebodings.

3. *His face as the sun*: The sun is the light of the universe and is the source of all physical radiance. Seeking a term of grandeur and splendor to portray the One to come, the prophet Malachi selected the flaming orb of the day, and likened the Redeemer to the "sun of righteousness." (Mal. 4:2) What the sun is to the solar system, Jesus Christ is to the soul. The rise of this sun of righteousness presaged a new day. With its appearance the darkness vanished and turned to day, the tomb itself yielded to his power and surrendering to his orders, released its seal. One mighty to save had come, who was the Redeemer of men, who brought to nought the power of death and of the devil to deliver all who through the fear of death were subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:14-15)

This angel clothed with a cloud, with a face as the sun, was the herald of the "Sun of righteousness" who would turn the night of persecution into the day of victory. (II Cor. 4:6)

4. *His feet as pillars of fire*: The feet are symbolic of the messenger. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." (Rom. 10:15) "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies." (Psa. 119:59) "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." (Eph. 6:15)

The feet of this strong angel were as "pillars of fire"—like the pillar that led Israel (Exodus 13:21-22) out of

Egypt, and was always the symbol of the presence and the guidance of the angels of God. (Exodus 14:19; 23:20; 32:34) Describing the feet of this angel as “pillars of fire” denoted that his feet were illuminated with divine guidance to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. (Luke 1:79)

5. *In his hand a little book opened*: This book in chapter 5:7 was “sealed and no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth was able to open it.” (Chapter 5:2) But the “Lion of the tribe of Judah”—the Lamb in the midst of the throne—“hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seals thereof.” (Chapter 5:5) It was therefore no longer sealed, no longer a mystery, but now an open book. When it was sealed it seemed large. Unknown things are greater in seeming proportion than the things that are known. They become simplified and minimized in proportion to the knowledge of them. When the seals within the book were loosed, or revealed, it became an open book, and it was *a little book* compared with knowing and not knowing its contents.

6. *Right foot upon the sea . . . left foot upon the land*: The land and the sea were the territories of their persecutors. Later the Jewish persecutors of Palestine were described as “the beast of the land” and the Roman persecutor was designated “the beast of the sea.” The sea beast was said to exercise authority over the land beast, based on the universal sway of Rome’s power. But the *mighty* angel stood with one foot on the land, the other on the sea, declaring his power over both as Lord of the land and of the sea.

7. *A great voice as a lion roareth*: The Lamb in the midst of the throne, once slain, who was the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had conquered to open the book and loose its seals, now came as the “mighty angel” to announce the near end of the things in the book; and when his “loud voice” heralded the angel’s proclamation, *seven thunders uttered their voices*, as signs of revolutionary events that would presage the end.

Thunder was regarded as the voice of God. (Job 37:2; Psa. 18:13; 81:7; Isa. 30:31-32) Thunder attended the inauguration of the law. (Ex. 19:16) When the people heard God's voice, they said it thundered. (John 12:29) It was a symbol of divine power in the executions of vengeance on evil-doers. (II Sam. 2:10; 22:14; Isa. 29:6) And that was its significance here.

8. *Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not:* The book of seven seals was opened, and its seals were loosed; the trumpets of the seven angels were sounded; but the seven thunders were *sealed up* and John was commanded *to write them not*. The things which the seven thunders uttered and which John was ready to transcribe, related to the things of the future not disclosed in the seals nor proclaimed in the trumpets, neither contained in the vials yet to be poured. They were things outside the realm of revelation, beyond all human knowledge or finite information. The sealing up of the thunders signified that there is a category of the infinite in God's dealings with men and nations which can never be revealed. and much therefore, after all the seals were loosed and all the trumpets had sounded and all the woes were pronounced and all the vials poured, which must remain enfolded and unrevealed.

There are in the nature of things of the infinite and the hereafter not within the scope of God's revelation to man. It is in keeping with the principle revealed to Moses, that "the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut. 29:29) There are things connected with the counsels and purposes of God, and the reasons for his dispensations with reference to them, which are hidden in his own bosom, not to be pried into by any man or order of men. What the voices of the seven thunders uttered cannot be known, and for any man to undertake to explain what John was forbidden to write, would be presumption. The voices of the thunders evidently belonged to that region of "visions and revelations of the Lord" to which Paul referred as

“unspeakable words not lawful for a man to utter.” (II Cor. 12:1-4) The command of *the voice from heaven* to *seal up* and *write not*, with no conditions, restrictions or limitations of time has in it a finality that prohibits the explanation that makes the voices of the thunders the mystic symbols of imperial edicts and papal bulls of the medieval centuries, and the continuous revelation of the history of Christianity to the end of the world.

9. *That there should be time no longer*: The words of finality spoken by the angel required that they be sealed with the binding force of an oath. In the Old Testament God is said to have sworn by himself. (Gen. 22:16; Isa. 45:23; Psa. 110:4; Psa. 89:35; Psa. 132:11) In the New Testament Peter refers to God having “sworn with an oath” to David. (Acts 2:30), and Paul declares in Hebrews 6:18 that God “confirmed by an oath” his immutable counsel, in which it was “impossible for God to lie.” So if the *voice from heaven* was Christ himself, or “another mighty angel” there was nothing inconceivable or incompatible that he should swear by the eternal Creator of heaven itself, and the earth and the sea, “and the things that therein are.”

Standing on the sea and the earth, as if to survey the full sweep of all human powers, Roman and Jewish, the angel proclaimed that there should be time no longer. The time for the seventh angel to sound the seventh trumpet was near, and the culminating events would be no longer delayed. This angelic proclamation did not refer to the end of all time, but rather to the end of the events signified in the vision. The word *time* here means delay, the time, or delay, of these events was about to end. In chapter 6:9-10 the souls under the altar cried “how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” In the response to this prayer, in verse 11, “it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season”—that is, wait for a time, until the vision “should be fulfilled.” That “little season” was about to end with the approaching proclamation of the seventh angel, the time should be *no longer*. The prayer of the martyrs for avenging judgment was about to be an-

swered and would speedily come with no more delay. In chapter 8:3 the prayers of *all the saints* are seen super-added to the cry of martyrs. The visions of the seven seals and the seven trumpets, with their intermissions, have been unfolded, and the vision having reached "the days of the seventh angel" there should be no more delay.

(2) The days of the seventh angel—10:7.

"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."

1. *Days of the voice*: This was a reference to the end of the Jewish state (Matt. 24:3), which was politically the end of the old Jewish dispensation, the days when the last trumpet was about to sound the note of doom—*when he shall begin to sound*—hence, in the days of the last events fulfilling these visions. They were fulfilled in that generation as foretold by the words of Jesus to his disciples. (Matt. 23:36 and Matt. 24:34)

2. *The mystery of God finished*: This mystery of God is that divine plan of Ephesians 1:9-10, which was to reach its fulfillment "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," and here the reference is to the "finish" of all events connected with its success. (Matt. 24:14) And it was accomplished for Jesus said, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

In verse 31, of this discourse of Matthew 24, the Lord said that after these events of the destruction of Jerusalem he would "send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet" to "gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." These statements in Matthew and Revelation are parallel in meaning and alike had reference to the universal expansion of the kingdom of Christ, after the fall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state.

The destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism, and the end of Jewish state, which politically and practically ended the Jewish dispensation, were all a part of the divine mystery. The

Mosaic law had been “nailed to the cross,” “abolished” and “taken away”; but the Jewish state continued, and in that sense the Jewish dispensation functioned, until “the days of the voice of the seventh angel” which sounded the final doom. This was all in and part of “the mystery of God,” the divine scheme of things, which was “finished” in the culmination of these events.

3. *As declared to the prophets:* These things were all declared to the Old Testament prophets and witness borne in the prophecies to their fulfillment. (Rom. 16:25-26; I Pet. 1:10-12) These were the things that were “manifested in last times”—the end of the Jewish world. (I Pet. 1:20) The old prophets contemplated all of the things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ, both of its inauguration and its expansion. (Gen. 49:1; Isa. 2:2-5; Mic. 4:1-4; Dan. 2:42-45; Dan. 10:14; Zech. 14) The revelations made known to the prophets were a declaration in advance of the things to come—a witness to them—and found fulfillment in the events herein disclosed.

### (3) The eating of the little book—10:8-10.

“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. 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. 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.”

1. *The voice from heaven:* The voice *again* is the voice of verse 4; and *from heaven* identifies it with the voice from midst the throne, chapter 9:13. It was the voice of direct authority from God, not through any agents, angels, creatures, elders or mediaries of the visions—but from God himself.

2. *In the mouth sweet—in the belly bitter.* The symbol of eating a book is found in the apocalypses of Ezekiel,

with the same effects as described in this vision. (Ezek. 2:9; 3:7, 14). The eating of this little book was in the mouth *sweet as honey*, as the precious flavor ascribed to the words of God. (Psa. 19:10; Jer. 15:16) The effects of eating the book were both sweet and bitter.

John said: *In my mouth sweet—in my belly bitter*. The assurances and promises of victory and of reward were “sweet as honey.” The contemplation of such triumphs produced the sweetness of joy and rejoicing; but the realization of the awful pronouncements fraught with fearful woes, turned the sweetness to bitterness in the belly, by reason of further contemplation on the tragic sufferings and sorrow, trials and tribulation they all would be called upon to endure in faithfulness, even in martyrdom, to receive the promised crown.

#### (4) The commission to evangelize—10:11.

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

1. *Thou must prophesy again*: Here is the clear indication that John survived the Patmos revelation. He survived the catastrophe of Jerusalem, to go among the nations, peoples, tongues, kings, proclaiming the passing away of the old things of Judaism and the end of the old system, preaching again the word that concerns the people of all nations. He would himself fulfill Matthew 24:31.

2. *Before peoples, nations, tongues and kings*: To apply the expression *prophesy again* to the further things in the Revelation does not fit the language used by the angel, *before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings*.” The statement is comparable to the words of Jesus to Saul on the Damascus road in that commission to be executed by Paul, the apostle, recorded in Acts 9:15: “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”

Furthermore, to make *prophesy again* mean to continue what he was then doing, and in the same way, would be a disregard for proper use and meaning of words. The

passage indicates that John left the scene of these visions and became an active evangelist in many countries, among many peoples and tongues.

(5) The identity of the mighty angel—10:1; 11:3; 12:7; 14:1, 14; 19:11.

1. The open book of 10:8-11 is the sealed book of 5:1. The Lamb took that book from the One who sat on the throne—5:7. After the opening of the seals, the book was given to John, thus identifying the angel of chapter 10 with the Lamb of chapter 5.

2. The description of the angel of chapter 10 corresponds to that of the Son of man in chapter 1.

3. He appears as Lord in chapter 11:3, exercising a power and authority not ascribed to created beings.

4. The representation of Christ under various figures and forms interspersed in the apocalypse agrees with his presentation as an angel rather than arguing against it. He is the Son in chapter 1. He is the strong Angel, in chapter 5:1-2. He is the Lion in verse 5. He is the Lamb in verse 6. In chapter 6:2, He is the Rider; in 14:1, He is the Lamb on Mount Zion; in verse 14, He is the Son on the cloud; and in 19:11, He is the Rider of white horse again. In these premises, arguments that the Christ could not be symbolized by an angel appear to be without foundation.

5. It is consistent with the purpose of the interlude that he should appear not as a judge, or king enthroned, but as the sun-countenanced, rainbow-crowned angel of the covenanted people.

(6) The measuring of the temple—11:1-2.

“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. 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.”



The contents of the eleventh chapter are a continuation of the scenes of the interlude, or intermediate visions, between the sixth and seventh trumpet announcements. The things narrated belong to *the days of the voice of the seventh angel*—the end of the Jewish state or political dispensation. The siege and fall of Jerusalem was at hand. The pronouncement of chapter 10 that there *should be time no longer* had been made. The eleventh chapter presents intervening scenes of measuring the temple, for the preservation of the “holy seed,” the “true Israel,” the “one hundred forty-four thousand,” the “innumerable host,” the “remnant according to the election of grace,” and the “sealed number”—representative of all spiritual Israel, the whole faithful church, and the true spiritual temple in contrast with the old temple which though still standing, was measured for destruction. The old Jerusalem, the apostate city, was marked for its downfall.

1. *A reed like a rod*: The indication is that this *reed* was *given* to John in the same manner and, hence, by the same One by whom the *book* was given to him in chapter 10:9. And *the angel* that commanded him to measure the temple is the same angel that commanded him to eat the book.

The use of the article *the* angel, rather than an angel, or *another* angel, designates the angel as Christ himself, as shown in the notes on the preceding chapter.

The reed was like a rod. The measuring reed was six cubits, about three yards in length. This measuring reed was like a rod, signifying the authority of its giver, the angel. In the psalm-prophecy of Christ, David said: “I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion . . . I will declare the decree . . . thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee . . . I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.” (Psa. 2:6-9) Again the psalmist said: “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.” (Psa. 110:1-2) Both of these psalms are applied in the New Testament to the rule and authority of Christ. In that same sense it is used

in chapter 2:27, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron"—the rule of irresistible authority.

The rod was also the symbol of affliction, as signified in the phrase "passing under the rod" of Ezekiel 20:37, and "take his rod away from me," of Job 9:34.

This measuring reed given to John symbolized the authority of this "mighty angel" (10:1), and his power to protect and preserve the true believers.

2. *Measure, temple, altar, worship*: At the start of the interval between the sixth and seventh seals, the angel announced the purpose of the interlude (chapter 7:3) as time to *seal the servants of God*; and in verse 4 he described and defined *the number of them which were sealed* as being symbolically *of all the tribes of the children of Israel*.

In the same imagery here, in the interval between the sixth and seventh trumpets, the command of the angel to measure *the temple, the altar and them that worship* is symbolic of the true Israel of God. They were measured for preservation, the holy seed of Israel, spiritual Israel, that should not perish. The measured number here in chapter 11 is the same company of believers as the sealed number of chapter 7. They are the symbolic one hundred forty-four thousand of all the tribes of Israel—of chapter 7:4—computed on the basis of twelve times twelve for the twelve tribes, and in the numeral thousand for a symbol of the aggregated whole, complete, total body of true believers, of the spiritual tribes of Israel. (Acts 26:7)

The symbolism of the measuring of the temple is exactly the same, the sealed servants of chapter 7 and the measured worshipers of chapter 11 are the same company, symbolic of the same thing, sealed and measured for the same purpose.

3. *The court which is without the temple—measure it not*: As the measured portion of the temple symbolized the true Israel, the court without, outside the measured part, signified unbelieving Israel. "The court without—leave out"—it was not to be measured for preservation. They were not the *sealed servants of God*—they were not included in the twelve times twelve thousand of the spiritual tribes. They

were *given unto the Gentiles*, and along with the old temple and Jewish state they were destined for destruction. As unbelieving Israel they should be cut off (Rom. 11:22). Paul said *cut off*; John said *leave out*. The whole symbol is that the measured portion was the preserved spiritual Israel, and the unmeasured part was the unbelieving fleshly Jewish nation "given to the Gentiles" to be destroyed by the Romans, which was done in the siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish world.

4. *The holy city shall they tread under foot*. Jerusalem was the once holy city: but was no longer that. It was here called holy because of its past association with the covenanted and the sainted ancestors. "How is the faithful city become harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." (Isa. 1:21) "O Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee . . . Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23:37-38) By divine decree Jerusalem was to be desolated and "trodden down of the Gentiles." (Luke 21:24) The judgment had already been passed, and John was commanded to leave Jerusalem out, and "measure it not," as that which had been cast away.

5. *A thousand two hundred and threescore days*. The mathematical calculation of this figure was twelve hundred and sixty days, the same period of time assigned for the flight of the woman into the wilderness. (Chapter 12:6)

The interpretation of scriptural numerals in relation to days and months should not be made on the basis of the literal number unless an over-riding reason for the exact mathematical application exists. Such a reason *does* exist in this calculation of the *forty and two months*, or the twelve hundred and sixty days of Revelation, mentioned in 11:2-3, 12:6 and 13:5. From the imperial order and the beginning of the siege to its end and completion it was forty-two months, or *a thousand two hundred and threescore days*, or the oft-mentioned *twelve hundred and sixty days*—that was the exact period of time, as a matter of historical record, which covered the events of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

An example of such necessary mathematical application is in the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the end of the ten tribes, chapter 7:1-9. Because of the importance of this Isaiahan prophecy, and its bearing on the exact mathematical application of the forty-two months period of Revelation, the entire section of the Old Testament prophecy is here inserted:

“1. And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jothan, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. 2. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. 3. Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; 4. And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. 5. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, 6. Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: 7. Thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand neither shall it come to pass. 8. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. 9. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”

This prophecy of Isaiah was to the effect that the conspiracy against Judah could not be executed, and that in *threescore and five years* the ten tribes (Ephraim) would cease to be a people, and it is the history of it that in exactly *sixty-five years*, from the date of Isaiah's prophecy, the ten tribes came to end—and that prophecy was literally

fulfilled. And it was the history of it, in connection with the point of discussion, that it was exactly *forty-two months* (twelve hundred and sixty days, or a *thousand two hundred and threescore days*) from the imperial command to besiege and destroy Jerusalem to the accomplishment of the commission—and this apocalypse was thus literally fulfilled also.

For the historical evidence, Vespasian received his commission from Nero, and declared war on Jerusalem February, A.D. 67. The siege ended with the fall of Jerusalem, the burning of the city and temple, in August, A.D. 70. This computation of dates yields the forty-two months for Jerusalem to be “trodden under foot” as in the vision of Rev. 11:2. The historical authority for these dates is Lardner’s *Jewish Testimonies*, Vol. 8, and Josephus, in *Wars Of The Jews*, Vol. 7. The continuous historical theory of the dark ages period and to the end of time lacks historical evidence and factual support and must be rejected.

In chapter 13:5 the same exact number was used to designate the period of the beast’s authority, and for the two witnesses to testify, as mentioned in verse 3, here in chapter 11. It was the same period as the “times of the Gentiles” in Luke 21:24, and it meant the time of judgment on Jerusalem by the Romans—therefore, the city was *trodden down* until the times connected with these events were fulfilled; that is, the period in which the Gentiles were engaged in the treading down of Jerusalem was thus designated, and only that period was envisioned in the mathematical phrases of the *forty and two months* and the *thousand two hundred and threescore days*.

The period designated as “the times of the Gentiles” in the Lord’s discourse on Olivet, as recorded by Luke, (21:24), does not refer to the time of salvation for the Gentiles, but to the period for the infliction of judgment on Jerusalem which was accomplished by the Gentiles (the Romans). The preposition *until* connected with the phrase *the times of the Gentiles* carries no indication of anything *after* the times mentioned. In Gal. 3:19 the apostle declared that the law was added *until* Christ should come—and that was its point of termination. In Heb. 10:9 the

apostle further said that the Mosaic ordinances were imposed *until* the time of the new covenant—and there the old ordinances ended. So the declaration that Jerusalem was trodden down *until* the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled had reference to the siege and destruction of the city—that was the point of termination, and Jerusalem and all for which it had stood in the system of Judaism, theocratically and politically, according to all prophecies and apocalypses concerning it, came to its inglorious end.

(7) The testimony of the two witnesses—11:3-14.

“3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three-score 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. 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 an 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 an 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. 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."

1. *Power unto my two witnesses*: The statement *I will give* in reference to *my two witnesses* reveals that the speaker here is Christ, *the angel* of verse 1, the only One who could assume such rank and authority. The assurance *I will give power* is based on a promise of the Lord to the apostles in Matthew 10:18-20, that when they should be arraigned "for testimony" they should "take no thought how or what" to speak; and as in Mark 13:11, "take no thought beforehand, neither do ye premeditate"; and as in Luke 12:12, "the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." This is the *power* here given to the witnesses.

The two witnesses are representative of the prophets and apostles whose testimony was "this gospel of the kingdom" which should be "preached in all the world for a witness" before the end should come—Matthew 24:14. The dual testimony is based on the requirement of the law in Deut. 19:15 that "at the mouth of two witnesses shall the matter be established," and repeated by Jesus in John 8:17, "it is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true"; the allusion to which is made also in Hebrews 10:28, "he that despised Moses' law died . . . under two or three witnesses."

These are the witnesses of Matt. 23:31-37, of whom the Lord said: "Ye are the children of them which killed the prophets . . . behold I send unto you prophets . . . and some of them ye shall kill . . . crucify . . . scourge . . . and persecute . . . O Jerusalem . . . that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee." They are representative of those mentioned further by Stephen in Acts 7:52, "which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" By the prophets of the old dispensation and the apostles of the new covenant, the testimony, divine revelation, was completed and by "the two witnesses" thereby established.

2. *Prophecy . . . clothed in sackcloth*: The word sackcloth was of Hebrew origin and was interfused into every language as a symbol of ill-fortune. It was the suit of mourning in death, the garb of humility and penitence under judgment, and the clothing of suffering in calamities and persecutions—as so mentioned in Job 16:15; Psa. 30:11; Jer. 4:8; Isa. 20:2; and Zech. 13:4.

The speaker in this vision told John that his two witnesses should prophesy *clothed in sackcloth*, as a sign of great affliction and as a token of the extreme suffering that their testimony should cause to come upon them, portraying retrospectively the altar scenes of chapter 6:9-11, and prospectively all of the tribulations yet to be unfolded, of which the two witnesses were representatives.

3. *A thousand two hundred three-score*: The forty-two months equal twelve hundred sixty days, computed mathematically ( $12 \times 30 = 1260$ ), which is in the text declared to be “a thousand two hundred and three score days.”

The reader is requested to turn back to the comments on verse 2 and compare again the parallel between Isa. 7:1-9 and the forty-two months of Revelation for an example of exact mathematical application.

It designated the period of time for the Gentiles to *tread* Jerusalem, the holy city, *under foot*, which was accomplished and fulfilled in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. It is also the appointed time for the two witnesses “clothed in sackcloth” to prophesy, in the appropriate garb of the prophets during the time of these woes. That is what the angel told John these representative witnesses should do, and it agrees with what the Lord also said should be done in the parallel passages previously cited in Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10; Luke 21:12-15-24. It is evident that the period of the treading down of Jerusalem was the time of the testimony of the witnesses also.

4. *The two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth*: Here the two witnesses are said to be two candlesticks and two olive trees. As already noted the number *two* stood for the established testimony of a



complete revelation, being the number of witnesses required for testimony to be legally established.

The candlesticks signified light, the dispensing of light, which was its general significance always. The olive tree was then the source of the oil for the lamps, the light the two olive trees, standing in relation to two candlesticks, should dispense. Actually, our word candlestick is not exact, a sort of misnomer, since that light-dispenser held lamps only, supplied with the purest olive oil when used in the tabernacle or temple service of God. In chapters 1:20; 2:1 the candlestick was made an emblem of the church, which is not itself the light, but holds forth the light from Christ, who is Himself the light. The two witnesses were thus given an extended significance as representative of the prophets and the apostles, holding the lamp of light, burning the oil of the divine testimony of the two covenants, the Old and New Testaments. As Zerubbabel and Joshua in the same symbolism of Zechariah 4, were said to be "the two anointed ones, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth," so were the two witnesses of this vision *standing before the God of the earth* as the representatives of the whole body of believers, the collective "witness of Jesus" and "the word of God" by "the testimony which they held." (Chapter 2:9; 20:4)

In verses 5-6 the two witnesses were set forth in this temple vision as both the light of the world and the protectors of the temple. "If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth . . . he must in this manner be killed." No power would be able to prevail against the two witnesses until their work was done. "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."

The figurative phrase *to shut heaven that it rain not* signifies the restraining of the civil powers to prevent and destroy the work of the witnesses. The power of the witnesses *over the waters to turn them to blood* and *to smite the earth with all plagues* were figurative descriptions of the

calamities that would follow the testimony of the witnesses to the ultimate destruction of their persecutors.

The *days* of the prophesying of the two witnesses defined the same period as the *days of the voice* of the seventh angel. (Chapter 10:7) In one the *mystery* should be *finished*, in the other they *finished their testimony*. During this period no power could prevail over them. It was that interval in which the angel of chapter 7 gave command to "hurt not . . . till we have sealed the servants of God." If any man willed to *hurt* them, initiated action against them, *he must in this manner be killed*—he would be destroyed in the manner that verse 5 describes, by the "fire" proceeding "out of their mouths" which "devoureth their enemies." These were the symbols of divine judgment against the persecutors of witnesses and the opponents of their testimony (verse 7), and it followed the same figures of speech of the threatened judgments of Christ to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3.

In verses 7-8, when the two witnesses had "finished their testimony," and the "days" of their prophesying were completed, the "beast" from abyss would "make war against them" and "overcome them" and "kill them." This agrees with the description of the "end" after the "gospel of the kingdom" had been preached "in all the world for a witness unto all nations." Neither earthly nor hadean power could prevail against them until their testimony was finished, but when this was accomplished, the beast of the abyss would overcome them. This introduces the beast which will be described in the following chapters, personified in the persecuting emperor, or power, which though as yet had not appeared in the form of the beast, was symbolized in "the angel" of the abyss of chapter 9:11. The "king" leader of chapter 9:11 was "the angel of the bottomless pit," and from that the bottomless pit this beast ascended also. He was the "Destroyer," the persecutor, they were identical.

The beast should *overcome* and *kill* the two witnesses. He was where they were, and where they became representatives of the persecuted church, and the martyrs, described in the following chapters. The beast could have been no other than the Roman power, for even when the Jews

by their own law demanded capital punishment, it was necessarily executed by Roman authority. The unbelieving Jews were themselves the instigators of these persecutions but the Roman emperor was the executing power, and was *the beast* which made war, overcame, and killed the witnesses—the cause they represented. But it was for a time only, for the witnesses should rise up and live again.

In verse 8, the specter of *their dead bodies* was seen lying *in the street of the great city*; it was an open spectacle of shame upon “the faithful city become an harlot.” (Isa. 1:21) The once glorious city was figuratively called “Sodom and Egypt,” a designation known to the Jews as symbols of wickedness. Jerusalem had become a spiritual Sodom and Egypt. (Jer. 23:14; Ezek. 16:46-52; Isa. 1:10)

The *great city* is identified in the text as Jerusalem by the description *where also our Lord was crucified*, of which, and in reference to himself, Jesus said, “for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” (Luke 13:33; Matt. 23:34-37)

It was consistent with all aspects of the scene to designate Jerusalem as Sodom and Egypt. The two names in biblical history were synonymous with abominable wickedness, oppression and persecution. Both designations—the holy city, and Sodom and Egypt—were adaptable to the checkered history of Jerusalem.

In verse 9, it is stated that *the people and kindred and tongues and nations*, such as were represented in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, should *see* the dead bodies of the two witnesses. The word *see* indicated that the people would come to know the testimony of the witnesses, and would not allow them to be *put in the grave*—that is, the cause of the two witnesses survived.

5. The *three and one-half days* here were one-half of the symbolic seven, a shortened period of calamity, corresponding to the Lord's description of these tribulations in Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20: “And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days”—the cause only shortly defeated.

A comparison of this application of the phrase *three and one-half days* is found also in the message that Jesus sent to Herod, recorded in Luke 13:31-33: "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." This was an effort of the Pharisees to scare Jesus; he was lingering too long in Galilee to please his adversaries; and he was adding followers and new adherents to his teaching, as his reputation increased. The province of Galilee was a safe retreat from the dangers that would surround Jesus in Jerusalem, and the Pharisees knowingly attempted to reverse the Lord's favorable surroundings. It was an alleged Herodian threat, which if true, and Jesus had yielded to the intimidation, it would have involved him in an ignoble flight from the scene of his ministry; and if not true, it was the strategy of the Pharisees under friendly mien and confidential guise to divert his course from Galilee into the more perilous regions of Jerusalem. The pretension was that despite their differences the Pharisees were concerned with the Lord's safety; but there was no evidence that Herod Antipas had any designs of killing Jesus, as ascribed by these Pharisees. He had already enough blood on his hands by the execution of John in which he had been entangled and entrapped unawares (Matt. 14:2); and thinking that Jesus was John raised to life (Luke 9:7-9), he would not have been so foolish as to kill him again; beside this, is the fact that Herod did not want to kill Jesus, as shown by his sending him back to Pilate rather than to sentence Jesus in his own court. (Luke 23:6-11)

The Herodian report was a Pharisaical invention, a fiction of their own to rid Galilee of Jesus, rather than a collusion with or an actual threat from Herod. And in the spirit of irony, not at all alien to his teaching, Jesus fell in with the report, knowing that the *fox*, whom he called *that fox*, was none other than the Pharisees themselves.

The Lord answered the Pharisees: *Behold, I cast out devils, and do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.* It would be equivalent to convicting the Lord of cowardice to construe his statement to mean that he would tarry in Galilee two days more and on the third day he would quit! The proper analysis of the passage is: As in the past, so in the present (today); I shall continue without interruption (tomorrow); and in the future also (third day), I shall pursue this course until my ministry shall have reached completion in the finished work (perfected).

There had been a predetermined time for the Lord's earthly ministry; instead of fleeing he would accomplish his work *this day* and *tomorrow*, and when the *third* or *last* day came, he should then have been perfected—his ministry fulfilled and his work finished. In the meanwhile there would be no abrupt or premature ending of his course by threats to intimidate or attempts to scare. *Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following.* The great Master had just stated that his divine ministry would continue to completion; now he refers to the day *following* as a day of *walking*, or the day of finished work. Henceforth, to the day of his passion, his resurrection and his ascension, until the purpose of his incarnation shall have been fully performed and accomplished, and his vacarious work crowned by his return to heaven from whence he came—until then, he would *walk* and *work* unlet and unharmed in Galilee, "for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." His destination was Jerusalem, the evil murderess of the prophets and the deadly enemy of the kingdom of Christ—and Jerusalem would crucify him. The Lord's words to the Pharisees, paraphrased, were these: My danger is not Galilee, nor Herod, but Jerusalem; your seat and headquarters, where you reign; and when the day of my death shall come, you the Jews, not Herod the king, will be the author of the murderous deed.

On another occasion (Jno. 11:9) when the disciples warned Jesus that the Jews had plotted to stone him, Jesus answered: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Here again a figurative expression was employed to indicate a

fixed and appointed time for the ministry of Christ to be accomplished.

In the same figure of speech employed by Jesus on the two occasions mentioned, John represents the two witnesses as having been dead in the street the *three and one-half days*. Here it denoted that fixed and appointed time for the people to see their testimony, as a result of martyrdom, during the period of suffering. But the fixed time was designated as *three and one-half days* because that figure is one-half the *seven days* period—as the number *seven* represented the full time; and one-half of seven, the *three and one-half days*, represented the shortening of the period of tribulation through which they were passing. This application of the time figure blends into a complete harmony with the Lord's own predictive narrations of the tribulation period, as though woven by one hand into one apocalyptic garment: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt. 24:21-22) The *three and one-half days* of the two witnesses were the pictorial fulfillment of the Lord's own prophetic descriptions.

The pronouncement of verse 9 that *they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations . . . shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves* indicated that the defeat of their cause was of short duration—it would survive death, as life returning before decomposition. All of the combined powers of persecution could not prevent the survival of the testimony of the two witnesses. But—*they that dwell on earth rejoiced*—the enemies of the cause showed great jubilation over the death and public exposure of the witnesses, rejoicing in the victory they thought was gained—but their celebrations were premature. In their exchanges of praise and self-congratulation they would *send gifts one to another* with mutual admiration in the part each of them played in the prosecution of the cause of the two witnesses gloating in victory *because the two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth*. The *earth* signified the place of the powers, the sphere of authority.

They were tormented by the presence and testimony of the two witnesses as the gospel torments the disobedient. (Acts 7:54); and as the effect of truth on evil spirits (I John 4:18; Matt. 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28).

The finale to the scene of the two witnesses was signified in verse 11: *After three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet.* The resurrection of the cause for which the two witnesses died was here envisioned. It compares with Isaiah's vision of the figurative resurrection of Israel from Babylonian exile (Isa. 26:13-19); and with Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37:1-14), in which the prophets described the resurrection of Israel from the grave of their captivity. The Ezekiel and Revelation passages contain several parallel expressions—the first, bearing on the return of the captive people of Israel from exile, and the latter applying to the overcoming of the heathen persecutions; the victory of the church over the persecutors; and the emergence from that period of tribulation and trial. Concerning Israel in captivity, Ezekiel said: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live . . . and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet." After the same manner of language in Revelation 11, John said: "The Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet." The Ezekiel passage was a prophetic picture of the return of Israel from captivity; and the Revelation passage was an apocalyptic portrayal of the emergence of the church from the period of persecution.

The effect of seeing the two witnesses stand upon their feet was described in these words: *Great fear upon them which saw them*: Reverence came over the by-standers—not the enemies themselves as yet—but the resuscitation of the witnesses, as of life out of death, brought reverence for the testimony of the witnesses.

Having been revived the two witnesses heard a voice saying: *Come up hither* (verse 12), and they *ascended in a cloud*. The triumph of the cause of the apostles and prophets over all foes was thus signified, and they were glorified for their testimony. It is on this principle that the souls of the

slain lived and reigned with Christ in Rev. 20:4; and that true Christians now reign with Him, as affirmed by the apostle in Rom. 8:17, I Cor. 4:8 and II Tim. 2:11.

In the vision *their enemies beheld them* ascend up to heaven. The witnesses *heard the voice*, and the enemies *beheld them ascend*—it is the scene of victory; it is the apocalyptic picture of the triumph of the cause of the apostles and prophets—the two-fold source of inspired testimony.

The awesome aftermath of these fearful occurrences was described in verse 13: *In the same hour there was a great earthquake*. The “same hour” evidently meant in the midst of these events—the period of the triumph of the cause and the testimony of the two witnesses—in the hour of the interlude between sixth and seventh trumpets. The *earthquake* signified the revolutionary storms, uprisings and upheavals in human affairs, in governments, and among both Jewish and Roman authorities, as it became evident to all, even the most desperate that the Jewish state and Jerusalem, their city, were doomed.

The statement that *a tenth part of the city fell* may seem obscure in meaning and application, but it has both religious and historical significance.

In the previous chapters the like figurative phrases were used in the pronouncements of *woes*, saying that a *third part* of the earth was smitten. The division of parts was descriptive of the devastations accompanying the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the blight of the whole land of Palestine that resulted. The *woes* symbolized this devastation as a series of occurrences, executed in succession. Each calamity was therefore symbolized as a fractional but a component *part*, in the order of the woes that were being pronounced.

After the same apocalyptic manner, the saying that there was *a great earthquake and the tenth part of the city fell*, meant that the city and state and commonwealth of the Jews had come to an end. There were ten provinces of the Roman empire, and in this apocalypse the commonwealth of Palestine was represented as a tenth part. The fall of Jerusalem, the capital city, brought the same disaster upon the entire Jewish commonwealth and, as a synecdoche, the



part was put for the whole—Jerusalem representing Palestine, the tenth part of the empire, and when *as a tenth part*, the city fell, so a tenth part of Rome fell.

It was as a result of the *great earthquake that the tenth part* fell, and the earthquake was symbolic of the great political upheavals that took place all over the Roman empire in connection with these catastrophes. The siege and destruction of Jerusalem had become the signal for revolutions in various other Roman provinces, the historical fact and details of which Josephus and Pliny relate, corroborate and verify. It was therefore reasonable and appropriate apocalyptically to put Jerusalem for the whole commonwealth, and with the downfall of the city, the *tenth part* fell. This view is further supported by the fact that there is no historical record of such a mathematically fractional part of Jerusalem falling during the siege. The contextual surroundings of the phrase were descriptions of the universal impact of the downfall of the Jewish state and theocracy on the whole empire, a tenth part of which fell with the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the demolition of the temple which symbolized the theocratic state; and the downfall of the perverted system of Judaism; and the end of the existence of the whole Jewish state. It is no marvel that these catastrophic events should be envisioned as *a great earthquake*, shaking the whole empire; and it is no wonder that the city was envisioned as a tenth part in the great downfall.

In further emphasis upon the colossal effect of such a stupendous event upon the whole Roman world, the huge imagery continues with the following declaration: *And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand*. From the beginning of time seven was the number of days in a week, and the number seven has been used in scripture, prophecy and apocalypse as a symbol of the perfect and complete. The employment of this symbolic number in that statement, "in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand," denoted that the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth was complete in the judgment that was passed on Jerusalem. Then, in contrast with the downfall of the enemies of the cause represented by the two witnesses it was said that *the*

*remnant were affrighted*—that is, the calamities were so great the rest of the populace, those not waging the persecutions, abandoned their leaders and rulers in the midst of the awe of the fearful occurrences. As the Roman centurion executioner stood in awe at the crucifixion of Christ (Matt. 27:54), saying, “truly this was the Son of God,” so beholding the things transpiring “the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.” This was the apocalyptic gleam of light piercing the gathering clouds of darkness—the omen of the success of the gospel and of the ultimate deliverance from persecution awaiting all who would be true to the faith. With this assurance, verse 14 declared that *the second woe is past; and, behold, the third cometh quickly*. The preceding scenes of the two witnesses had predicted the second woe; now, the final blow was at hand—the end. The sounding of the seventh trumpet was immediate—*cometh quickly*—and that was the last woe.

(8) The seventh trumpet—11:15.

“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.”

1. *The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven*. The interlude was over. The seventh trumpet sounded the *finish*—the end of the tribulation period. It was the completion of the “mystery of God” which was “according to the good tidings” of the prophets, fulfilled in the fall of Judaism, the triumph of Christianity, the success of gospel, the victory of the church, and the expansion of the kingdom of Christ. The “great voices in heaven” were the combined voices of the vision united as one to proclaim the announcement of the seventh trumpet. Before this it had been *an angel* or *a voice* but now it was all of the voices together in one *great voice* to announce the end of all events of the vision. The work, which had begun with the prophets (I Pet. 1:10-12) and completed by the apostles, had triumphed over the powers of men, and *the kingdoms of this world* had become the *kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*. The dominion of earthly rule in the

kingdoms of men could no longer overpower Christianity—through their citizens they had *become* the kingdoms of our Lord (God), and of his Christ. This declaration depicted the conversion of the empire's citizens—the worldwide expansion of Christianity. It was the fulfillment of the words of Christ in Matt. 24:31 to *send his angels with a great sound of trumpet*, after the destruction of Jerusalem to gather together his elect from the *four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other*. With the fall of Jerusalem came the shaking down of all Jewish opposition to gospel. Christianity was liberated from the fetters of Judaism and entered upon a worldwide career of leavening the civilizations of world by bringing them under the influence of Christ. Thus the kingdoms or dominions of men *became* the kingdoms of our Lord (God) and of *his Christ*. In Eph. 5:5 the apostle designated it *the kingdom of God and Christ*, and declared in Col. 1:13-14 that it was then present. But in the apocalypse, the trumpets, thunders and earthquakes were envisioned as shaking down opposition of all human dominion to give way to the “kingdom which cannot be shaken.” (Heb. 12:18-28) From the apostle's vantage-point could be viewed the sites of Babylonia, Persia, Grecia and Rome, all of which were shaken, upon the ruins of which was to be firmly planted and forever established the kingdom that remains.

## 2. “And he shall reign forever and ever.”

The seventh trumpet sounded the full sway of kingdom of Christ over all opposing forces—Jewish and Roman. From henceforth his elect were to be gathered “from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other” (Matt. 24:31) and the earth made full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14) It was the joining of prophecy and apocalypse in the delineation of the sway of the kingdom of Christ, fulfilled in the universal sweep of the gospel. *And he shall reign forever and ever*. In the “kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” God shall reign forever—his dominion over all earthly kingdoms was established in the events resulting in triumph of the cause of *his Christ*. This reign refers to the everlast

ing dominion of God, which no human authority, governments or powers can ever dethrone.

(9) The song of triumph—11:16-19.

“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 Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 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 shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest 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.”

Verse 16 reverts to the worship of the twenty-four elders of chapter 4, in the beginning of vision. They were the enthroned representatives of the Old Testament and the New Testament—of Israel and the church. The visions began and end with them, in the symbols of the complete church of God, which was here seen rejoicing in victory.

Verse 17 proclaims the success of the kingdom in a singing throng, opposite to the mourning tribes of chapter 1:7 and Matt. 24:30. It was the answer to the souls under the altar of chapter 6:9-11. God had *taken to thee thy great power*, exercised in the events of the visions—and *hast reigned*. He had ruled and overruled, as absolute monarch of the world, governing and disposing of all things in heaven and in earth, as affirmed by prophets of old. (II Sam. 5:4-5; Psa. 93:1)

Verse 18 declares that the *nations were angry* in fulfillment of Psalms 2:2, 5 and Acts 4:24-30. It represented the attitude of the heathen world toward the gospel of Christ. The day of God's *wrath* had come on the persecuting powers, as depicted in chapter 6:17. *The time of the dead that they should be judged* had come—they were dead as persecutors and as lords of dominion over the servants

of Christ, as in Isaiah 26:13, 19 in reference to Israel. The time of avenging judgment had come, for the witnesses of chapter 11:7-8; and for the martyrs of chapter 6:9-11; and for "all righteous blood shed upon the earth" of Matt. 23:35. The time had come to give victory's *reward unto his servants the prophets; and to the saints; and them that fear thy name*. The imagery delineates the ruin of the enemies and the reward of the servants and saints of God and Christ—summed up in the phrase *small and great*, the full aggregation of *them that fear thy name*. These all, in the aggregate, were included in song of glorified elders. The Jewish rulers, aided by Roman rulers, who together *contrived to destroy the earth* in their opposition to the kingdom of God, by the persecutions waged were themselves *destroyed*. In Matt. 21:33-46, Jesus specifically pictured this end of the Jewish rulers and their state.

Verse 19 presents the closing scene—*the temple of God opened in heaven*. It was the new temple, the vision of that which was measured for preservation in chapter 11:1. It was the "true tabernacle" of Heb. 8:2; 9:13; 10:9. It was only re-introduced here, without further description, to become a part of second series of visions.

In this new temple was disclosed *the ark of his testament*. In the Jewish temple of John's time, yet standing, there was no ark of covenant "within the veil." It had long been lost. But in the vision of the restored temple—the true spiritual temple (Heb. 8:2), which supersedes the temple made with hands, there reappears the holiest and most sacred of all the treasures of the old tabernacle—the ark of the covenant. It symbolized that what was lost in the old is restored in the new—and the apostate Jewish state yielded its place to the complete restoration and perfection in the New Testament church of Christ.

The curtains fall in the last words of this first vision: *And there were lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail*.

These things followed all that had gone before in the vision. When the seventh trumpet sounded, the vision ended with lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake, and hail, which all at once came, as the sign to John that the revela-

tion had not ended with the first vision. The great crisis just passed was to be followed by more of the same symbolism—and the *heaven* of this vision was therefore still *open* with the close of chapter 11. But *the beast* that *was*, and *was not*, of chapter 13:8, *yet is*—he would again be active.

Thus chapter 11 ends the first sequence of events. The second begins with chapter 12, and repeats the imagery in another but similar set of symbols, extending the same events and experiences.

## V.

### SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN SEALS

It will be remembered that the seven trumpets were within the seventh seal. When the seventh seal was opened, seven angels appeared, having seven trumpets; in the hand of each angel, a trumpet. The significance of the sounding of the trumpets was to signal the commencement of the impending events which had been revealed by the opening of the seals.

(1) *The first trumpet*—chapter 8:7—was the signal of devastation, signified by the smitten earth, indicating divine judgments on the land of the Jewish powers.

(2) *The second trumpet*—chapter 8:8-9—was the signal of the smitten sea. Casting the burning mountain into the sea signified the divine judgments on the sea power, the Roman monarchy, burning with the lust of war; the destruction of the power of the sea beast persecutors to make war against Christ.

(3) *The third trumpet*—chapter 8:10-11—was the signal of smitten rivers, which signified by the great burning star the fall of the rulers, as spent meteors, from their former dominion; and the dissipation of the source of their power was symbolized by the drying of the fountain which supplied the river which flows through its channel.

(4) *The fourth trumpet*—chapter 8:12-13—was the signal of the smitten sun, signifying the darkness that would settle over the Jewish state in the divine judgments to descend on Jerusalem, bringing an end to Judaism.

(5) *The fifth trumpet*—chapter 9:1-12—was the signal of the fallen star, personified in a degenerate leader of impious forces, designated as an army of locusts from the smoke of the pit, and symbolizing the invasion of Judea by terrifying armies led by Satan personified in the persecuting emperor—the resulting calamities of which brought to pass the first of the three woes enumerated by John.

(6) *The sixth trumpet*—chapter 9:13-21—was the signal of loosing the four angels, the imperial agents which had been restrained from hindering the messengers of Christ until the true Israel of God was sealed “of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” The spiritual Israel was symbolized by the hundred forty-four thousand—the holy seed. With the completion of this mission of “sealing the servants of God,” the suspension period was declared ended, and the four angels of destruction were loosed to proceed with the encompassing desolation of Jerusalem.

(7) *The seventh trumpet*—chapters 10-11—was the signal of the finale, “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel”—the last days of the political Jewish state and the dispensation of Judaism—accompanied by the testimony of the two witnesses as necessary to establish testimony. It symbolized the two-fold mission and work of the prophets and apostles in the unfolding of the scheme of redemption, begun by Old Testament prophets, but completed by New Testament apostles, and fulfilled in the church. The tragic calamities surrounding these representatives of the church marked the passing of the second woe and the immediate pronouncement of the third woe in the sounding of the seventh trumpet, ending in the conquest of the kingdoms of the world by Christ the conqueror.

## VI.

## A RECAPITULATION OF THE FIRST APOCALYPSE

The apocalypse known by all as the *Book Of Revelation* is comprised of two parts—two series of visions—therefore, essentially two apocalypses, but consisting in a repetition of import under a second set of symbols. The first series surrounded the conquering Christ; the second series surrounded the victorious church.

The object of the visions of the first part, beginning with chapter four and ending with chapter eleven, was mainly the end of both spiritual and political Judaism, resulting in the expansion of the new “kingdom of God and Christ” over the whole Roman world.

In harmony with this objective the first century persecutions, with that generation of martyrs, were represented by a system of signs and symbols, consisting in the opening of seven seals and the sounding of seven trumpets. The seven seals contained the successive events of divine judgment in the symbols of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple of the Jews. The opening of the seals represented the making known, or the revelation, of these judgments; and the sounding of the trumpets signaled that the time to commence had come. This first series of apocalypses include chapters 4-11 of Revelation.

## (CHAPTER 4)

The Revelation began and proceeded from the Throne in heaven, with Him who sat on it; Christ in the midst of it, surrounded by twenty-four elders, symbolic of the complete New Testament church—the totality of spiritual Israel, based on the twelve patriarchs and apostles of the old and the new dispensations.

## (CHAPTER 5)

The book with the seven seals could be opened only by Christ the slain Lamb, who had risen to prevail and who had become the Lion of the tribe of Judah, able



to defeat and conquer all the forces set in opposition to his Cause. The seven seals portended the overthrow of the persecuting powers both Jewish and Roman.

### (CHAPTER 6)

The four seals were in the order portrayed by the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

The *white horse* and its Rider of the first seal symbolized Christ, the Conqueror, the leading figure of the imagery, who appeared again at the end of the visions as the Rider of the white horse in the procession of victory in chapter 19.

The *red horse* and rider of the second seal signified the persecutor waging war against the Cause of Christ.

The *black horse* and rider of the third seal, represented distress, calamity and deadly famine, indicated by the symbols of the balances and scales for the weighing and measuring of all food allowances.

The *pale horse* and rider of the fourth seal were designated as death and hades, and signified death, not death by martyrdom, but by pestilence and scourge.

The *fifth seal* was the martyr scene of souls "under the altar" asking for avenging judgment, which, though delayed in a waiting period until the procession of events "should be fulfilled," was in due time and order received; and John saw them receiving this judgment in chapter 20:4, for which he had heard them asking in chapter 6:10—thus signifying the resurrection of the Cause for which they had been slain.

The *sixth seal* was the earthquake, which signified the shaking of the existing powers of government by revolutions, upheavals and wars; and the various divine visitations on the persecuting authorities. This was symbolized by the darkened sun, the falling stars and the scrolled heaven, all of which meant the folding up of the powers of persecution and the fall of Judaism. The events of this seal ended in the scene of the great day of wrath, where these portents of judgment descended on the great and

mighty men of the earth, who are envisioned as calling upon the mountains for a hiding place from the face of God on the Throne, and from the wrath of Christ, whose Cause they had persecuted.

(CHAPTER 7)

The *seventh seal*, the last in the book of seals, displayed seven angels standing before God, to whom seven trumpets were given; and they "prepared themselves" to sound the seven trumpets as signals that the time had come to accomplish the seals, and that they were ready to proceed.

(CHAPTERS 8-9)

In the sounding of the seven trumpets seven angels proclaimed the judgments which were attended by the woes which John periodically announced in the progressive vision of the seventh seal, which have been summarized in the preceding section of these comments.

(CHAPTERS 10-11)

Lastly, the culmination of all the events of the first apocalypse was depicted when the seventh angel sounded the seventh trumpet, and the great voices in heaven in grand unison proclaimed: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

The Rider of the white horse had conquered. Judaism, the arch enemy of Christ had fallen; the stars of Jewish rulership had been plucked from their orbits of dominion; the Jewish state was ended; the temple was no longer standing. The New Jerusalem and the spiritual temple of New Israel had prevailed. From the apocalypse of the Conquering Christ, the visions turned in chapter 12, to his tortured but triumphant church.

# **BOOK OF REVELATION**

## **SECTION FOUR**

### **THE APOCALYPSE OF THE VICTORIOUS CHURCH**

**(CHAPTERS TWELVE TO TWENTY-TWO—  
VERSE FIVE)**

**(THE SECOND SERIES OF SYMBOLS)**



## CHAPTERS TWELVE TO TWENTY-TWO

12 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.

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.

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: Mí-chā-ěĭ 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 Sā-tăn, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

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*.

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.

**13** 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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

14 AND I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount

Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

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 firstfruits 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.

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.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they



that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

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.

15 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.

**16** 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.

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.

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.

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.

17 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

18 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.

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.

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

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.

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.

19 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 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 thunderings, 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.

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.

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;

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.

20 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.

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.

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.

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 gether 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 received 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.

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.

21 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.

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 cry-

ing, 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.

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 idolaters, 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.

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, an 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.

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, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; 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.

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.

22 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.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

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 fellowservant, 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.

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 whore-mongers, and murderers, and idolaters, 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.

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.

# THE APOCALYPSE OF THE VICTORIOUS CHURCH

## PREFATORY NOTE

The first series of symbols ended with the last verse of chapter eleven. The first verse of chapter twelve is the beginning of the second series of symbols. The visions of this section were a recapitulation of the events of the first series, beginning from the first again, but with a new set of symbols. They cover the same period, a repetition of the same imagery in the delineation of the same occurrences.

The reason for the two series is stated in the headings by which the purposes of the two series are indicated. In the first series, the symbols surrounded the Lamb, the Rider of the white horse—the conquering Christ—with the descriptive emphasis placed on activities of “the beast of the land,” representing the Palestinian persecutors. The second series of symbols surrounded the victory of the church—the conqueror’s Bride—over all the forces of persecution, in a set of symbols which placed the emphasis more fully on the activities of the Roman Emperor, who was represented as *the beast of the sea*, from whom *the beast of the land* derived authority to act. It was, therefore, said that the beast of the land *worshiped*, or “obeyed,” the beast of the sea—meaning that the Palestinian authorities could do nothing without the consent of the Roman Emperor.

The pattern of the Old Testament apocalypses are again recognized in the similarity existing between them and the visions of Revelation. A striking example is found in the dream visions of Joseph, and of Pharoah in Genesis (37:5-11; 41:18-32), and of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel (chapters 2 and 7). In the visional dreams of Joseph concerning himself and his brothers the symbols of the sun, moon and stars of the second dream represented the same things as the vision of the sheaves in the first dream. The same thing is true of the visions of the cattle and the ears of corn in Pharoah’s dreams—the successive dreams were visional re-

enactments of the same events. In the same manner the four beasts of Daniel in chapter seven were symbolic repetitions of the four kingdoms of the colossal image dream of chapter two.

By the same process the first series of visions in Revelation, embracing chapters four to eleven, portrayed Jesus Christ, the prevailing Lamb of God, in multiple symbols of conquering all enemies of his church and avenging the martyred saints, defeating all the minions of Satan. All of the events in this set of symbols were envisioned from the throne in heaven, as introduced in chapter four, setting forth the sending of armies by the King of heaven to destroy the murderers of his prophets and apostles and saints, burning their city and bringing an end to their persecuting power. These visions surrounded, as previously set forth, the siege of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the destruction of the city, the downfall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish theocratic state.

The unbelieving Jews were the instigators of the persecutions. Rome was only a collateral power to the unfolding scenes. Apostate Jerusalem, Judaism and the Jewish state were the objects of the apocalyptic portrayal. With the downfall of Judaism the greatest enemy of Christianity was removed from the path of the church, opening the door for the universal expansion of the gospel.

The second series of visions, now ready for consideration, are retrospective—as they reveal the church in conflict with the diabolical powers of Rome, surviving all forces of persecution, and appearing at the close of the vision as the triumphant Bride of Christ, the church, after Babylon the Harlot had fallen in defeat. The victory of the church over these Jewish and Roman persecuting powers was set forth in the imagery of the new Jerusalem in contrast with the apostate Jerusalem. Pronouncing the same judgment on old Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah exclaimed: “How is the faithful city become harlot! It was full of judgment: righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.” (Isaiah 1:21) And again, “Babylon the great” (11:8), “a holy city, turned unrighteous and filthy.”

In contrast the new Jerusalem, the church, as the Bride



of Christ, was robed in habilaments of victory “as the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven”—after which divine judgment was pronounced upon the persecuting nations; and the tabernacle of God would be with men, signifying his dwelling place among his people in the new spiritual city rather than the evil persecutors of the old apostate city. All tears of persecution were to be wiped away. The sorrows attending the period of their persecutions would cease, and the church again would set out on its divine mission of making known the Spirit’s message to all men—the gospel invitation.

The twelfth chapter retrospectively begins with the portrayal of the church in conflict with the existing powers under the symbol of the woman and the dragon.

## I

### THE WOMAN WITH CHILD

(Chapter 12:1-2)

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

It is generally agreed that the woman was a symbol of the church. In the Old Testament Israel was repeatedly characterized as a woman, as in Jer. 2:32. In the New Testament the church of Christ is presented in the figure of a pure woman, as in I Cor. 11-3, Galatians 4:26 and II John 1. There can be no more fitting description of the church in holy relation to Christ, the Head, than that of the pure woman. True to this figure the vision describes in glowing symbols the character and attributes of the woman, as symbols of the apostolic church.

In Revelation the word *heaven* was employed to denote governments and authorities. The Lord Himself so used the word in his own description of the destruction of Jerusalem in referring to “great signs in the heavens,” and “stars falling from heaven”—a symbolic reference to the casting

down of the Jewish and Roman rulers and authorities. In Luke 10:18, Jesus said: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." In this language the Lord was forecasting Satan's complete downfall from his place and power of dominion, which would come as swiftly as lightning, as the result of Christ's victory over the hades world by his death and resurrection.

The *sign in heaven* meant the heaven of exalted dominion and rule—the heaven of the political dominion of the whole world. The "great sign" seen in the realm of authorities and dominions referred to the symbolic attributes of splendor and grandeur which followed, in which the woman was adorned before the whole political world.

(1) The sign in heaven—12:1

1. *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven.* The word *wonder* here meant a *sign*—a sign was seen in heaven. There are numerous uses of the word heaven in the scriptures. Among the Hebrews it was used chiefly in three senses. First, the aerial heavens where the winds blow and the rains form and the birds fly; second, the firmament where the stars as pendant jewels adorn the sky, and where all the constellations and planets are in orbit; third, the highest heaven, the third heaven, the residence of God and Christ, the dwelling of angels and mansions of the blessed. There are scriptures that use the word *heaven* in all of these senses.

2. *A woman clothed with the sun.* The sun is the great luminary that God created and placed in the heavens to preside over the day. The sun being obscured and ceasing to shine were symbols of calamity and darkness settling over nations. In the same way the shining of the sun was used as a similitude of the glory of God. When the Spirit in John, the seer, needed a figure to adequately set forth the glory of the church represented by the woman, he selected the flaming orb of the day—the woman, the church, was arrayed with the sun, the very glory of God.

3. *And the moon under her feet.* Standing with the moon under her feet was symbol of the exaltation of the

church—an extended description of the glorious and exalted position of the church among and in the midst of all the creations, institutions, and governments of man. The symbol picture was most especially significant in the Roman world where this glory and exaltation would in succeeding events become visibly manifest to all the authorities of Caesar's empire. Isaiah the prophet pictured the church (chapter 2:2) "on top of the mountains, exalted above the hills." The vision of the woman standing with *the moon under her feet* was the same imagery of exaltation.

4. *And upon her head a crown of twelve stars.* The stars are the glory of all the luminaries which adorn the heavens. No part of the visible creation exhibits the supreme glory of God so illustriously as the starry firmament. The crown of stars was the diadem of highest glory on the head of the woman—the glorious church. In royalty it was the ornament of queens. Ahasuerus "loved Esther above all the women . . . so he set the royal crown upon her head." (Esther 2:17) The stars were used in scripture to designate all luminaries of heaven, except the sun and moon.

The *twelve stars* on the head of the woman is representative of totality, of completeness, of perfection. There were twelve tribes of Israel, representing the whole Old Testament church. There were twelve apostles for the New Testament church. The twelve stars in the diadem on the woman's head were a complete symbol of the whole church as typified in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament.

## (2) The woman's pain—12:2

1. *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered—verse 2.* A similar figure was used by the prophet Isaiah (chapter 66:7-8) of Israel in exile. Israel in the Old Testament was said to bring forth children. The church, in Rom. 7:4, was said to be in spiritual conjugal relation with Christ resulting in bearing fruit unto God. John mentions "her children" (II John 1) in symbolizing the church as the "elect lady." The woman here symbolized was the church in trial and persecution.

2. *Travailing in birth.* In this period of tribulation, the church would produce children in sorrow for martyrdom.

3. *And pained to be delivered.* During the period of greatest tribulation the church did not cease to bear her fruit; she continued to bring forth children, but in pain and persecution and martyrdom.

The following verses will develop further the application of these verses to the part of the woman's seed that was martyred—the "child that was caught up unto God"—and the part of her seed, called "the remnant," or *rest* of her seed, that remained on the earth to suffer, but not to die.

## II

### THE GREAT RED DRAGON (Chapters 12:3-6)

"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. 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. 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."

Trustworthy authorities cite the fact that the original word here rendered *dragon* appears in the New Testament only in Revelation. In the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament) the same word is rendered *serpent*, in Ex. 7:9; and *leviathan* in Job 41:1; and *dragon* in Jer. 51:34. In Isaiah 27:1 the prophet referred to *leviathan* as "that crooked serpent," which apparently connects with the *serpent* of

Genesis 3:1 in Eden. In the Septuagint text serpent in Isaiah 27:1, is rendered *dragon*, and in both Hebrew and Greek texts it is made the symbol of Babylon, the power hostile to the people of God. In Ezekiel 29:3 *dragon* in the Septuagint was made the emblem of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the bitter enemy of God's people Israel.

In this chapter of Revelation the names *Satan* and *Devil*, *Serpent* and *Dragon* were used interchangeably, and evidently personified the persecuting powers hostile to the church; that is, Nero and his successors, in whom the persecutions and the persecutors were personified.

(1) The dragon with multiple heads and horns—12:3-4.

1. *And there appeared another wonder in heaven.* This wonder was referred to as another sign. The other wonder, of verse 1, was the sign of the glory of the church in the symbolic ornaments of splendor with which the woman was adorned before the imperial world.

In this reference, of verse 3, the sign was in the same *heaven* mentioned by Christ in Luke 10:18: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." It meant his dominion of diabolical influence. The church is called the "kingdom of heaven" because it is the reign of heaven in the hearts of men, and which designates its divine realm. Jesus said to Pilate, "Now is my kingdom not from hence." The word "hence" means *here*—his kingdom is here but not *from here*; it is from heaven. The word "heaven" referred to its heavenly origin and character. The word "now" referred to its immediate establishment in the world. But the heaven of Satan, from which he fell (Luke 10:18), meant the realm of his diabolical influence, and referred to the political authorities, governments and powers of the whole Roman world. It was the sign of an appalling persecution of unprecedented fury, beginning with the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, which was soon to burst upon the church; and the sign of this chapter was comparable to the signs of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, thirteenth chapter of Mark, and twenty-first chapter of Luke, all of which

contain the Lord's description of the events of the same period.

2. *A great red dragon*—12:3. The dragon referred to Satan, the antagonist of the church, personified in the active persecutor—Nero and his successors—as representative of all that was opposed to Christ and the church.

The flame-coloured description of the *red dragon* was the type of the destruction of war and the bloodshed of martyrdom. As in chapter six the colors of the horses corresponded with the mission of the riders. The horses were symbols of war and the *red horse* signified bloodshed. So it was here—the *red dragon* signified the murderous character of these minions of Satan—the Roman and heathen persecuting powers.

3. *Having seven heads and ten horns*—12:3. As in chapter 5, verse 6, the *seven eyes* of the Lamb represented the perfection of wisdom, so the *seven heads* of this verse indicated the perfection or completeness of the universal rule and government of Rome, the seven-hilled city of the Caesars, to which the number seven in this reference may have been an allusion. But it was an evident symbol of the complete power of the ruling Roman emperor.

The *ten horns* represented the unified universal power of the Roman emperor through the ten tributaries of the Roman government—all of which were in complete subjugation to the Caesars of Rome's seven hills on the throne of which at this time sat Nero Caesar, the ruling emperor. The ten horns, therefore, denoted the ten kingdoms over which the emperor ruled.

4. *And seven crowns upon his heads*—12:3. The *seven diadems* upon his heads show the regal glory of this dragon. It should be noted that the diadems were not the crown of *stars* which was upon the woman's head, indicating the divine glory of the church; but here they were crowns of diabolical power and assumed glory. It is not an exaggeration that the great antagonist of Christ and the church in that era of greatest crisis should appear in symbols of pomp and power.

5. *And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven*—12:4. The *tail* of the dragon was in the imagery of the sweeping power of the antagonist of the church and the destruction behind him in the wake of persecution, described in the symbol of pulling the stars from their orbits with the angry lash of his enormous tail. It was the vision of the presumptive power of the persecutors of the church.

6. *And did cast them to the earth*—12:4. The reference to casting down to the earth *a third of the stars of heaven* appears to have had application to the part of the political world that was subject to these destructions—Jerusalem, Judaism and the Jewish state. The application to geographical or political divisions could have had no meaning. The same expression in chapter eight referred to the three woes of destruction, one part each, as noted in the comments on that section. Here the imagery was that of a symbolic portion of the luminaries of heaven being dragged down by the dragon's tail. It signified his potent weapon in the power to harm in the pending events of the destruction of the Jewish world, represented by the destruction of Jerusalem, the downfall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state.

## (2) The object of the dragon's rage—12:4-5.

1. *And the dragon stood before the woman . . . for to devour her child*—12:4. This statement indicated that the object of the dragon's deadly rage was the woman, which symbolized the church; and her child, which meant the martyred saints to which the woman would give birth in the pain of persecution and martyrdom. The woman's child was here employed not in a singular sense but in the *collective* use of the word.

2. *To devour her child*. The dragon was represented as standing before the woman in childbirth ready to destroy her child *as soon as it was born*—like Pharoah in Egypt (Ex. 1:16-22), watching to destroy every male Israelite; and Herod (Matt. 2:13), ordering the slaying of every Jewish male. This dragon-persecutor was waiting for the opportunity to send the Christians to their martyrdom.

3. *And she brought forth a man child*—12:5. The use of the word *man child* here is in neuter gender. And it is not singular number any more than the use of the word “mother” when used in a collective sense; and that is the sense in which *man child* was used here—collectively, denoting that portion of the church, or the woman’s seed, which was to be *caught up to God* in the martyrdom which followed. That the *man child* did not refer to Christ becomes evident in the following verses. The expression *caught up to God* from the face of the dragon would hardly be a fitting description of the ascension of Christ, but it was an appropriate symbol of the triumph of the martyrs who “overcame . . . by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” It further harmonizes with the scene of victory for the souls of the beheaded in Revelation 20:4.

The *man child* was not a single person but a collective body. It was that part of the woman’s seed which was put in contrast with *the remnant*, or the *rest of her seed*, in verse 17. The woman’s seed compares with the firstborn ones of chapter 12:23 of Hebrews “which are written in heaven”; and “the firstfruits unto God” (Rev. 14:4); and the “kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (Jas. 1:18).

The *man child* that was *caught up unto God* was that part of the woman’s seed, or children, who were martyrs—“the souls of them that were slain for the word of God,” under the altar, in the suffering of death in chapter 6:9-11; and on thrones in the state of victory in chapter 20:4. The *remnant*, or rest of the woman’s seed, or children, remained on the earth to suffer persecution but not martyrdom. It compares also with the account of the two witnesses who *ascended up to heaven* in chapter 11:12, and the effect on the enemies who beheld them. (See comments on chapter 11:12)

It is not unusual in the symbolic imagery of scripture description to characterize members of the church as its children. Examples of this use are found in Rom. 7:1-4; Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:23, 28; II John 1, 4, 13.



4. *Who was to rule all nations*—12:5. The reason apparently for the interpretation that the *man child* refers to Christ is the statement of verse 5, that he “was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.” But this same phrase was used in the language of Christ to the members of the Thyatira church in chapter 2:26-27: “He that overcometh . . . to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.” The *rod of iron* was the symbol of the impact of the gospel on the pagan world through the victory of the church, resulting from their persecutions. It signified the inexorable character of the law of the gospel in retribution and reward. It was by teaching and practice that those who should overcome all oppression would rule with Christ, and thereby execute his unfailing law as with a rod of iron. (See comments on chapter 2:26-27 and in *GOD’S PROPHETIC WORD*, p. 192.)

(3) The woman’s flight into the wilderness—12:6.

1. *And the woman fled into the wilderness.* The context of these visions surrounded the events prior to and including the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the church in Judea by onslaught of persecution. Jesus foretold such a flight in his description of the destruction of Jerusalem in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. This cannot be considered an application too light or limited or unimportant for this vision. The portent was tremendous. It was of extremely ominous and terrible proportions. In the Lord’s warnings and in his own forebodings he exhorted them to pray that the flight might not come at a time when hindrances to the flight could not be overcome, and the difficulties of escape would be insurmountable i.e. to the woman with child, who could be greatly handicapped in flight; in the winter when the cold weather would add to suffering and misery; on the sabbath day, when due to the Jewish observance of the sabbath the exits of the city would be closed, its gates locked, barring an expeditious flight, and they would find themselves entrapped. (See *GOD’S PROPHETIC WORD*, p. 336-337) The period of escape from Jerusalem after the city was alerted would be so short that the Lord warned the one on the housetop

not to come down to enter his house for even clothing or food; and the laborer in the field not to return to his house for such purpose, for the same reason.

Describing the horrors of the siege Jesus called it "the tribulation of those days; and quoted the prophecy of Daniel 12:11 on "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15) as being fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. During the siege one million one hundred thousand people perished. All the houses and underground chambers were filled with perishing bodies; famishing people ate the putrified flesh of human corpses; mothers ate the flesh of their own babies.

Outside the besieged city the expatriated race of Jews throughout the empire were slaughtered. In his chronicles on the destruction of Jerusalem Josephus, the eye-witness historian, verifies the declaration of our Lord in Matt. 24:21: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Since the Lord Himself declares that no event of the future could exceed the tribulation, there can be no reason to search for events in later history, or to engage in speculation on events of future history to fulfill the identical symbolic descriptions of Revelation. The signs and symbols of Revelation were but the extensions of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, spoken by the Lord Himself in Matthew's record and extended by his servant John in the visions of Revelation.

In this chapter 12, verse 6 of Revelation, John stated that "the woman (the church) fled into the wilderness." This was precisely what Jesus commanded his disciples to do. When the signs which he had set forth should appear Christians in Jerusalem and Judea were to make hasty their flight. In Matt. 24:33 Jesus said to them: "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." In the parallel record of Luke 21:20, He said, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh"—and they did know it. In Matt. 24:16 the Lord said, "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." In Luke 21:21, the parallel adds, "And let them which are in the midst of it

(Jerusalem) depart out"—and they did, they departed and fled.

As generally known, Josephus was an eyewitness to the siege of Jerusalem and the events preceding it. In *Wars*, Book III, Section 3, page 3, he relates that after the armies of Cestius Gallius, Roman general, had besieged Jerusalem, they withdrew—and in this interval the disciples fled, according to the Lord's admonition. The historian Josephus was an unbeliever and admitted his inability to account for the cessation, but declared it was nevertheless a fact. All who believe the statements of the Lord in Matthew twenty-four, Mark thirteen and Luke twenty-one, know and understand the why—it was the Lord's doing.

Another later historian, Eusebius, whose history bears date of 324 A. D., states in Book III, Section 3, page 3, that the church in Jerusalem, by divine revelation, fled to the mountain country of Pella, beyond the Jordan, which according to Josephus was largely a desert, mountain region.

The Lord of the descriptions and signs of Matthew's record of the destruction of Jerusalem is the Lord of the portrayals and symbols of Revelation. There is no difference in the command for all the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea to *flee* to the desert region of Pella, in the record of Matthew and Luke, and the statement in Revelation, chapter 12:6, that she *fled* into the wilderness.

2. *To a place prepared of God.* The disciples' flight was to a place where Jesus had directed them: "Let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." But Revelation states that the woman fled to "a place prepared of God." The place where Jesus commanded is the place that God prepared. The descriptions are parallel.

Furthermore, Jesus said in Matthew 24:34: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." All of the signs of Matthew 24 are above verse 34. Jesus said they were *all* fulfilled in the generation of people who heard his words. (For further discussion on the destruction of Jerusalem, see *GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD*, pp. 246-260.) It is so with the symbols of Revelation. Jesus said to the disciples in Luke 21:31-32: when "*ye* see" and "know *ye*"; and

"I say unto *you*." His emphasis was on the fulfillment of the signs in events of their own lives. The parallel in Revelation is verse 3 of chapter 1: "Blessed is *he* that *readeth* (the one who read it to the churches); and *they* that *hear* (heed) the words; and *they* that *keep* (remember and observe); for the time is at hand." If the time of these things was so remote as to be yet future, there was no point in this exhortation for them, and no application to them. As the signs of Matthew 24 were fulfilled in that generation of living people, so the symbols of Revelation were fulfilled in the experiences of the existing churches.

3. *That they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.* Here is an instance of a literal period of time, a specific date, introduced into a figurative and symbolic context. There is another identical example of a specific date connected with the context of prophetic language. In the seventh chapter of Isaiah it was prophesied that the ten tribes would cease. Ephraim was forming an alliance against Judah. The prophet said it would not stand, that Ephraim would be broken, cease to be a separate people, and become extinct as a nation. In fulfillment of it they went into captivity and never came out one people again. Now, read the prophecy of specific time period and historical dates from Isaiah 7, verses 5 to 8:

"Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people."

The prophet stated that "in threescore and five years (sixty-five years) shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people." The date of this prophecy is 733 B. C., according to such authorities as *Wordsworth*, *Adam Clarke* and *Pulpit Commentary*. The event prophesied was fulfilled in 669 B. C.—exactly sixty-five years later. The date of Ephraim's

decease was linked with the prophecy that the invasion of Judah by Samaria would fail. That invasion did fail. The prophet said Ephraim would cease to be a people. Ephraim did cease to be a people. It all occurred within the "three-score and five years," between 733 B.C. and 669 B.C.—the specific time period and date. (For further discussion of Isaiah 7:5-8 see *GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD*, p. 409.)

The context yields the same exact computation of *a thousand two hundred and threescore days* of the woman's flight into the wilderness. It was the same period of "the forty and two months" of the preceding chapter eleven—the same mathematical time period in which Jerusalem, "the holy city" was trodden "under foot forty and two months." In the record of Luke 21:24, this period of the treading under foot of Jerusalem was limited by the phrase "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." It was the same period as the "forty and two months" of Revelation 11:3, and the thousand two hundred and threescore days of chapter 12:6. The specific mathematical period designated, historically verified, follows this order:

Emperor Nero delivered the mandate for the siege of Jerusalem to Vespasian, his imperial officer, in the month of February A. D. 67 when the war against Judea was declared. This was the beginning of the period which ended in August A. D. 70, when the city of Jerusalem was razed, ravished and destroyed; the temple was desecrated and demolished, bringing an end to Judaism and the Jewish state. This exact computation is attested, as mentioned previously, in the authoritative works of *Jewish Testimonies*, Volume VIII, by Lardner, and *Wars of Jews*, Volume VII, by Josephus. No further evidence is necessary. As in Isaiah's prophecy, the end of the twelve tribes was a specific mathematical period of sixty five years—so the time period covering the flight of the woman into the wilderness was chronological—the forty-two months or twelve hundred and sixty days in which Jerusalem was besieged. There is no need to look farther away for the fulfillment of these apocalypses. Every effort to bring them down through medieval history and "the dark ages" has been anachronistic and impossible. But assigning Revelation to the same period as all

the other epistles of the New Testament, all of which were written before the impending trial and tribulation and distress, lends coherency and harmony to its apocalyptic delineations.

### III

#### THE WAR IN HEAVEN (Chapter 12:7-17)

“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. 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. 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.”

There are several words in the general vocabulary of Revelation, the connotations of which must be understood. These are the words: air, earth, sea, quake, heaven, stars and war. The symbols are employed in the following meaning: *air*, the sphere of life and influence; *earth*, the place of the nations; *sea*, society described as either troubled and tossed or placid and peaceful; *quake*, the political shaking of the nations; *heaven*, the governments, authorities and dominions; *stars*, the rulers and officials of governments; *war*, the upheavals in the governments and among inhabitants of the earth (various provinces of the empire); and the conflicts between the heathen authorities and the church in the waging of the persecutions of the saints. With this nomenclature defined, the various facets of the phraseology employed in the next few verses can be explained.

(1) The War with Michael and His Angels—12:7-8.

1. *There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.* The war in heaven meant the hostilities which developed with the tributary governments of Rome. Two classes were here placed in opposition—Michael and his angels are put in opposition to the dragon and his angels. The dragon and his angels represented all of the powers of paganism and darkness. Conversely, Michael and his angels were representative of the truth and the light of Christianity. Michael was represented in Daniel 12 as defender and guardian of Israel. So Michael and his angels were the representatives and protectors of the woman—the persecuted church. They fought against the dragon and his evil angels by the means of the war between the satellites of Rome, because these conflicts within the Roman empire diverted the emperor's attention from the persecutions of the woman and gave respite to the church. History verifies this outbreak of wars within the Roman empire during this period of persecution; and in Matthew 24 Jesus foretold that such wars would exist to "shorten these days."

2. *"And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven"*—12:8. The almost universal belief

that Satan originated in heaven with God and Christ, apostatized from his created angelic state, caused war among the sinless world of God's own heaven, and because he could not be tolerated there, he was expelled to this mundane sphere to trouble and torment all humanity for all time—that is an inherited belief or notion completely out of harmony with the character of heaven. It is a great incongruity.

Heaven, where God dwells, is the divine domain of light, where is no darkness, no evil, no apostasy. Hell is the diabolical realm of darkness, where there is no purity, no good, and where light cannot penetrate. The generally accepted view that Satan became a wicked angel in heaven where God dwells, and that he corrupted and recruited other angels for his revolution, puts apostasy in heaven and is incompatible with the nature of the angels of God in heaven. If apostasy can befall the inhabitants of heaven, in consequence it would render insecure all who obtain that world, in that being subject to apostasy they, too, might be expelled. No sin, nothing evil, can enter or prevail in the abode of the pure and holy in the eternal mansions of God's habitation.

The passage in Isaiah 14:12 was descriptive of the degeneration of the ancient king: "How art thou from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations." In his degeneracy this wicked king of ancient history, whose depravity weakened the nations, was cut down; he fell from his high place of dominion. The meaning of the *heaven* from which the Satanic dragon was cast is the same as the *heaven* from which fell Lucifer, the wicked Babylonian king.

When Jesus said to the disciples (Luke 10:18) that he "beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," he did not mean that with physical sight he had seen the devil as a physical object fall—it was rather the Lord's forecast that he had foreseen Satan's complete defeat and downfall from his throne of evil dominion. It was Satan's own heaven or domain of rulership from which he would fall, and it would come soon and as swiftly as lightning—and it did.

When Peter mentioned (II Pet. 2:4) the angels that



sinned, and were cast down to hell, and delivered to chains of darkness, and reserved to judgment—it was undoubtedly in reference to the downfall of certain representatives of the human race in high estate, the era and details of which the apostle left unmentioned and therefore remains unrevealed. It is more reasonable to theorize that Satan and his devils originated in this manner than to hypothesize that he inhabited and corrupted heaven, the abode of God.

3. *And the great dragon was cast out . . . which deceiveth the whole world . . . he was cast out into the earth—* 12:9. The dragon and his evil agents “prevailed not” against Michael’s protection of the woman, which he accomplished by the diversion of the emperor’s diplomacy to employ his armies to quell the revolutions in many parts of the imperial world.

The context of this section was a diversion from the main scene due to the side effects of the involvement of the Roman rulers in the revolutions in their far-flung tributaries.

So the statement *neither was their place found any more in heaven* was a reference to the final outcome, and is not chronological, or in the order of sequence here.

The dragon prevailed not—the cause of the woman (the church) which Michael represented triumphed, in the war with heathenism which the dragon represented, and he eventually “prevailed not” but lost his own place *in heaven*—that is, in the governments which had been used to persecute the church. And, *he was cast down to the earth*—that is, Satan was cast out of his sphere of influence through the government authorities against the church. He was cast down to *the earth*—the place of the inhabitants of the nations as distinguished from the children of the woman, the church. The woman had appeared in the same sphere with the dragon in the *war in heaven*, as antagonists and was represented by Michael against the dragon. In the final outcome of this struggle the dragon lost his place of power and influence—hence, *cast down* from his high position in which he had been able to deceive the world. Dethroned from his dominion he went in search of other prey, as men-

tioned in I Pet. 5:8—"the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

The dragon in the end was seen as having lost "the war in heaven" against the woman. Jesus anticipated this defeat of Satan in John 12:31: "Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." This judgment was pronounced upon the dragon in the war against the woman. He lost his place of dominion, but continued to *deceive* the world, as declared by Paul in Ephesians 2:2: "According to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The phrase "prince of the power of the air" denotes a sphere of influence only. Satan has no longer a dominion of power. He is only an influent being who exerts a deceptive influence, an infiltration insensibly affecting the mind and conscience—an inflow of evil.

In Revelation the term *earth*, as previously stated, designated the place of nations, distinguished from the realm of the church. And *air* refers to the sphere of life and influence. Thus having lost his power of dominion, he is now *prince of the power of the air*—that is, having only an exercise of influence which only operates through "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

Jesus Christ through the gospel destroyed Satan's power—he holds no power of dominion over any one. He can operate only through the sphere of influence. The one who serves Satan is a willing servant "through the spirit of disobedience." God has the power to destroy both soul and body of one who refuses to serve him (Matt. 10:28), but Satan has no power over any one (Heb. 2:14); if one does not choose to follow Satan, he can do nothing; he has no power to conscript, and no power to punish.

*And the great dragon* was cast out into the earth. Satan "prevailed not" against the woman, the church, and was "cast out into the earth," the place of the nations, where he would again in a broader effort seek to deceive the whole world, as distinguished from the church.

*And his angels were cast out with him.* These Satanic

angels included all of the combined forces of heathenism which he had employed against the church, and as "prince of the power of the air," he continued to operate in the sphere of life and influence through the spirit of disobedience.

(2) The victory of the woman—12:10-17.

It should be remembered that with the twelfth chapter there is the beginning of the recapitulation of all the events depicted in the first series of visions from chapter four to eleven. The first series of symbols surrounded *Christ the conquerer*; the second series encompassed the same events in a new set of symbols and surrounded *the woman*, the church in the midst of that period of trial. The verses now under consideration set forth the woman's victory over the dragon and parallels the triumph of the Rider of the white horse of the sixth chapter who was the conquering Christ of the closing verses of chapter eleven.

1. *And I heard a loud voice saying, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ—12:10.* This "loud voice" of victory reverted to the chorus of "great voices" in 11:15; and the exclamation "now is come salvation . . . and the kingdom of our God" was repetitive of the refrain of chapter 11:15, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." The meaning is that the kingdoms of the world *became* the kingdoms of the Lord by the conversion of its citizens. It was the anticipation of the world-wide expansion of Christianity through the gospel, after the destruction of Jerusalem, as forecast by the Lord in Matt. 24:31—and that is the meaning of the statement, "now is come salvation . . . and the kingdom of our God."

The *salvation* here meant deliverance of the woman (the church) from the dragon; and *strength* referred to the source of endurance; and the *power of his Christ* referred to that authority higher than Rome's emperor, that divine *rod of iron* by which the power of Satan, personified

in the persecutor, had been broken and by which his diabolical character had been exposed.

2. *For the accuser of our brethren is cast down—12:10.* In verse 9 it states that the dragon was cast out into the earth—the place of the nations, or the political society. This was not the positions of government authority included within the sphere of the phrase *in heaven*. In verse 10 the dragon (the persecutor) was called the *accuser of our brethren*. This referred to that part of the offspring of the woman who were not martyrs, but were like the seer of the apocalypse on Patmos: “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” The emphasis put on *the accuser of our brethren* by the additional statement, *which accused them before our God day and night*, indicated the habitual character of the dragon-accuser, that the oppositions of the persecutor would be persistent and continuous.

3. *But they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death—12:11.* The victors here are not the same company as Michael and his hosts of verse 7. The dragon had lost that war and had been cast out of that sphere of conflict but continued his opposition to the *brethren* of those of whom Michael was defender and protector—he extended his persecutions to the woman’s offspring, or the church beyond the region of Jerusalem and Judea. But as Michael and his hosts had prevailed against him in Judea so did the *brethren* elsewhere who became the objects of the dragon’s extended persecutions. And this verse commemorates by anticipations the victory which the saints had won on the *ground* or *cause* and by the *means* of the blood of the Lamb, the shed blood of Christ. The further reason for their victory was *the word of their testimony*—because of the faithful testimony which they had borne in oral declarations. The high tribute in the praise that *they loved not their lives unto death* meant that these persecuted saints had disregarded their lives for the sake of their cause; in the willingness to join the martyrs they displayed

the fidelity that brought them victory over their accuser and persecutor.

4. *Therefore, rejoice ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them*—12:12. The power of the persecutors broken, and the accuser of the brethren exposed, was here the cause for this *rejoicing of the heavens*—because it had been delivered from the evil spirit of the accuser. The *heavens* here meant that spiritual realm referred to in Eph. 1:3 as the heavenly places. The phrase *and ye that dwell in them* meant that these *heavens* are the spiritual abode of every faithful soul. (Eph. 2:6) It is that spiritual sphere of the church in which He dwells to lead and instruct his followers, and in which his power had kept them through their faith in Him and their fidelity to His cause. (Eph. 3:17)

This benedictory is comparable to the prophet's song of rejoicing for Israel in Isa. 49:13: "Sing O heavens; and be joyful O earth . . . for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted." The Isaiah passage referred to Israel of the Old Testament in exile, and this Revelation text refers to the church of the New Testament in their period of persecution.

5. *Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*—12:12. The persecutions which had been focused on one sphere of the dragon's activity in the realm of governments against Jerusalem were not *expanded to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea*. The word *earth* here was used to denote the land of Palestine—as the reference to the *beast of the land* designated the Palestinian persecutor. The word *sea* indicated the regions of the empire beyond the land of Israel. The dragon's defeat in the first sphere of his war against the woman intensified the activities of his persecutions, and *having great wrath* he transferred his oppositions and expanded them to *the earth and the sea*—to all regions where the children of the woman, the objects of his wrath, could be found.

The statement *because he knoweth that he hath but a*

*short time* was based on the fundamental principle pervading the apocalypse—"which things must shortly come to pass" (1:1); and "the time is at hand" (1:3). The binding of Satan, the dragon, and casting him into "the bottomless pit" were included in the things which in the first chapter of the Revelation the seer announced as *at hand*, and *must shortly come to pass*; which things in the last chapter he declared *must shortly be done* (22:6); and *quickly* to occur (22:7); and, once more, *at hand* (22:10). From the first chapter to the last the Revelation repeatedly emphasized the immediacy of the events, removing them from remote fulfillment. It forms a solid argument for the fulfillment of the symbols of Revelation in the experiences of the churches addressed.

The extension of the apocalypse to the medieval centuries, to the dark ages, to the present day, and to the end of time is the greatest anachronism in all history.

6. *He persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child*—12:13. Here the scenes narrated in verses four to nine were resumed. These descriptions repeated in different symbols the events of the first series which chapters four to eleven had envisioned.

In verses four to nine of this chapter the woman's flight into the wilderness was related. Here in verses 13 and 14 the reason and manner of her flight were described. The reason was that under the guardianship of Michael and his hosts the dragon and his forces *prevailed not* in the "war in heaven"—in the high places of authority in governments—against the woman's seed. Being defeated it was said that *neither was their place found any more in heaven*—that is, in the sphere of previous activity against the church, in the realm of political authority and government. But Michael's triumph and the dragon's failure to destroy the woman's seed did not prevent the further persecutions. Enraged at being thwarted in his plans to annihilate the church by the destruction of the *man child* in Jerusalem, where it was born, and which was caught up to God and to his throne, the dragon turns upon *the woman* and launched a general persecution against the whole church. It was at this point

and for this reason that *the woman fled into the wilderness* (verse 6), the manner of the flight being described here in verse 13.

The “*two wings of a great eagle*” that were given to her was the same symbol of divine strength employed in the exodus of Israel from Egypt. In Ex. 19:4 God said to Israel, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle’s wings, and brought you unto myself.” The instinct of the eagle, when its young are ready to attempt flight, is to hover over the nest and flutter its wings to lead the young ones into the venture. In Deut. 32:11-12, in the Song of Moses, it is recorded that “as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him (Israel), and there was no strange God with him.” In this same imagery, and doubtless in allusion to it, the seer of Revelation represents God’s hovering protection and imparted strength in the flight of the woman from besieged Jerusalem into the wilderness, as God did for Israel in the exodus from Egypt, to “a place prepared of God” (verse 6), or “into her place” (verse 14)—the same place.

As previously noted, the Lord foretold this flight in similar description of the tribulation of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” According to this statement of the Lord there cannot ever be events of the future to fulfill these descriptions. It is evident that the context of Revelation is only an extension of the Lord’s predictions in Matthew twenty-four, and that the Revelation was received and recorded several years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the impending “present distress” of I Cor. 7:26, which was so soon coming upon the church of the God. In the same Corinthian context the apostle said, “the time is short.” The darkest threatening cloud and the most frightening, horrifying portents hanging over the whole church, were the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and their attending tribulations.

7. *Where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent—12:14.* In this

wilderness, or *place prepared of God*, where Jesus instructed the disciples who later formed the Jerusalem church to flee, the verse states concerning the woman that *she was nourished for a time, times and a half time*. This nourishment of the woman in "her place" compares with the manna by which Israel was fed in the wilderness, upon which event this description is based. In the Old Testament experience it was the result of the flight from Egypt of *church of Moses* in the wilderness of Sinai; in the experience of Revelation it was the *church of Christ* in the flight from Jerusalem to *her place* in the wilderness of Pella—that *place prepared of God*, where she was nourished by providential protection. The numerical designation *for a time, and times and half a time* was equivalent to the *forty and two months* (of chapter 11:2), and the *thousand three hundred and threescore days* of chapters 11:3 and 12:6, and they were equal to the same thing. They all refer, as explained in the comments on their mention in the preceding verses, to the mathematically calculated period of *twelve hundred and sixty days* between Nero's order to Vespasian in the declaration of war and the completion of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem which brought an end to the Jewish state and the system of Judaism.

The mystically phrased expression of *time* and *times* and *half a time* was related to the ebbing and flowing of the tide of the persecutions and was comparable to the reference in chapter 17:8 "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." The beast *was* when the persecutor was active; the beast was *not* when there was an interval of time between the persecutions; and the beast was seen as being reactivated in the last expression *yet is*. In a similar way the *time* and the *times*, of chapter twelve, referred to the period of the persecution in stages, and the expression *half a time* was the symbolic reference to the shortening of the period of tribulation as indicated in chapter 11:9 in the expression *three days and a half*, and as foretold by the Lord in Matt. 24:22. It is consistent that the *time and times and half a time* shall be considered to mean the same shortened period as indicated in the expression *three days and an half*, in both of which the exact period from the commencement of



the siege to the termination of it was certainly designated. (See comments on chapter 11:9)

It is said in verse 14 that the woman was nourished for this time *from the face of the serpent* (verse 14), in a place far from, and safe from, the scene of the siege and its accompanying trials, humiliations and horrors.

8. *And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood—12:15.* The *water as a flood* from the mouth of the serpent was the symbol of an overwhelming tide of persecution, combining all of the Satanic forces of destruction at the command of the serpent. The psalmist David used the same imagery in Psalms 18:4, 16: "The floods of ungodly men made me afraid . . . he drew me out of many waters." In a poem of salvation Isaiah, the prophet, exclaimed: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (Isa. 59:19) The prophet Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Philistia with the same symbolic description as David and Isaiah: "Behold waters rise out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land and all that is therein: then the men shall cry and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl." (Jer. 47:2)

The most significant Old Testament use of the flood symbol is Daniel's parallel prophecy on the destruction of Jerusalem, generally referred to as "the seventy weeks of Daniel." (Dan. 9:27) The mathematical computations bring the fulfillment of this prophecy from "the going forth" of the commandment to rebuild and restore the temple to the final destruction of Jerusalem—the whole period from the proclamation of Cyrus to the end of the Jewish commonwealth—in the words of Daniel "the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." (Dan. 9:26) The dual phrases "the end thereof shall be with a flood" and "unto the end of the war desolations are determined" referred to the flood of persecution and the end of the war terminating in the fall of Jerusalem and end of the Jewish state. Thus the prophecy of Daniel is identified and merged with the apocalypse of

John on the siege with its overwhelming flood of persecution. Such is the evident application of chapter 12, verse 15, of Revelation—"And the serpent cast out of his mouth as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." The woman escaped this flood of the horrible onslaught of this war of the Romans against Jerusalem, declared by Nero, ordered by Vespasian and executed by Cestius Gallus and his general, Titus. These related events blend naturally and historically with the apocalypse, and they are not anachronistic.

9. *"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"*—12:16. The symbol of the *earth* in Revelation has been defined as the *place of nations*. That was its meaning here. The rebellions and uprisings and local wars which were occurring and increasing at this time, causing many conflicts among the subordinate kingdoms and nations of the empire, diverted the attention and action of Rome, and thus detracted Roman authorities from the persecutions. It had the effect of a diversionary strategy. Here again the predictions of Jesus in Matthew twenty-four parallel the apocalypses of Revelation. Jesus said: "For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." This is exactly what occurred—and that is how the *earth helped the woman and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth*. The leading thought is that divine providence overruled the transpiring events to protect and sustain and deliver *the woman*—his church—in the day of her persecution.

10. *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*—12:17. Because his strategy to destroy the church within Jerusalem, by the woman's flight and the *help* she received from the *earth*, the dragon's wrath, mentioned in verse 12, was intensified in the persecution of the *remnant of her seed*—or as otherwise translated, *the rest of her seed*. By the phrases *remnant*, or *rest of her seed* was meant

that part of the church which did not dwell in Jerusalem and Judea and was not of the martyred number.

The woman's seed was composed of two classes—first, the *man child*, represented collectively as *firstfruits*, who were *caught up unto God*, symbolizing the martyrs; second, the *remnant* or *rest* of her children who were not martyrs, but remained on the earth to pass through the tribulation. The word *man child* is an aggregate term which could not have referred to a single person, anymore than the collective phrase *rest of her seed* could have had singular meaning. The text will not yield to the view that the woman's *man child* was Christ. There is no principle of exegesis which can represent the church as the *mother* of Christ. But there are numerous examples that represent both the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament collectively as composed of the same ones who are separately called the children, as a part of the whole. Hosea 4:6 referred to Israel as a whole, and then mentioned them as “thy children.”

Isaiah 66:7-8 prophesied of the nation that brings forth children. Jeremiah 31:15 had “Rachel (the nation of Israel) weeping for her children.” (Also Matthew 2:18) Daniel 12:1 made reference to Israel as a people, but as “thy children.” Matthew 13:38 refers to the “children of the kingdom.” The kingdom is composed collectively of them all, as a whole, yet they were children of it. Galatians 4:26 calls the spiritual Jerusalem “the mother of us all”—it is composed of us all collectively, but the mother of us all separately. Hebrews 12:23 refers to the general assembly and church of the first born. The word *firstborn* is in the plural number in the Greek text and means the firstborn ones. The general assembly and church are collective, but the firstborn are the children of it. So it is in Revelation with *the woman*—the church; and *her seed*, children composed of the two classes—the *man child* (martyrs) *caught up unto God*; and the *rest of her seed*, throughout the empire, against which the dragon “went to make war,” and who, with the plaudit of the seer, kept “the commandments of God” and had “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The commandments mentioned here pertained to their fidelity in the

tribulation; and the expression *the testimony of Jesus Christ* referred to the witness or testimony that He had borne to them concerning the outcome of the period of trial through which they were passing, as in chapter 3:20: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (trial) which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell in it." The *world* referred to the Roman world, and *them that dwell on the earth* referred to Christians in every kingdom, nation or tributary, in every place or part of the empire.

### (3) The summary of the symbols.

The context of chapter twelve yields three major points which must be classified and discriminated in order:

First, the woman was a symbol of the Jerusalem church—represented as "the new Jerusalem," in chapter 21:2 at the close of the Revelation, and stands for the whole church.

Second, the *man child* referred to the martyred souls as "the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb." (Chapters 6:10-11; 14:4; 20:4) The woman's seed "caught up unto God and to his throne," who thereby entered into a state of victory over the dragon and his wrath in a distinctive sense. (Chapter 12:5)

Third, the *remnant or rest* of the woman's seed were distinguished from the *man child*, as being that part of the woman's seed who suffered the trials of the great tribulation but were not slain or beheaded as were the martyrs. (Chapters 6:9-11 and 20:4)

The *woman* of this chapter, therefore, must be considered as the organic body of the church—the totality of its members; distinguished from *her seed*, or children—the constituent members of it, in the two classes mentioned.

The text and context will sustain this analysis, and these viewpoints can be maintained.

## IV.

### THE TWO BEASTS

#### (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. 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. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, 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. 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. 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. 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."

The vision of chapter twelve dramatized the enmity of the dragon for the woman—the church of Christ—and his determination in wrath to expand his war on the rest of the woman's seed to the whole of the Roman empire. It was for this reason that chapter thirteen begins with John's vision of the dragon placing himself on sands of the sea for the purpose of extending his war against the woman, whose seed was destined to destroy him, and in fury he had turned upon "the rest of her seed" in persecuting them to extinction.

(1) The composite beast of the sea—13:1-2.

1. *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea—13:1.* Until this stage of vision the dragon's activities had been confined to Palestine, but now a beast rises out of the sea as the instrument by which to implement and to execute his diabolical plans. He summoned aid from Rome. The beast had *seven heads* and *ten horns*, and was the symbol of the great power of Rome. The ten horns represented the ten divisions of the Roman empire, the emperor of which was seated on a throne situated on the seven hills of Rome, the universal symbol of the imperial city.

2. *Like a leopard . . . a bear . . . a lion—13:2.* In moral and political character the emperor was featured as a composite monster after the likenesses of the ferocious beasts of prey, the leopard, the bear and the lion. The ten crowns, or diadems, on the *ten horns* symbolized the royalty and rank that belonged to the ten kings of the tributary kingdoms, and the great universal power of the ten-kingdom empire.

In addition to the ten-crowned horns, upon the heads of the beast *the name of blasphemy* was inscribed. This is a

fitting description of Nero Caesar, in whom "the Neronic anti-Christ was incarnated," who assumed divine names and prerogatives, and commanded the worship of the emperor.

3. *The dragon gave him great power, and his seat and his authority—13:2.* The world power of the Roman empire could not have been more accurately described. The visions are not symbolic of the city of Rome. There is no allusion to "the eternal city." The visions of Revelation were not a history of Rome, but within their symbols were included the graphic representations of the emperor and the empire. The Roman *See*—in Latin, a seat of power and authority—was derived from the dragon, who *gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.* The dragon, therefore, was personified in the emperor of the Roman empire. Later, in verse 11, the second beast appeared on the land, as a satellite of the first beast, to execute his orders. The dragon gave the *seat* and the *power* and the *authority* to the first beast. The second beast of the land was said, in verse 4, to have worshipped the beast of the sea. The land beast represented the Palestinian persecutors, which were subordinate to the Roman emperor, having no authority, except as derived from him. The distinction between *land* and *sea*, in these designations of the two beasts, is simply that the *land* in the vision stood for Palestine, and the *sea* for Rome, separated from Palestine by the sea, and symbolized as universal in sway.

## (2) The wounded head of the beast—13:3-4.

1. *And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast—13:3.* The wound inflicted was not in one of the *horns* of the beast, which represented the satellite kingdoms, but in one of the *heads*—in the seat of the empire itself. This wound, which was nearly a death stroke to the empire, appears to be the result of the *help* the *earth* gave to the woman in the civil wars which had threatened the power of the empire, and which resulted in

temporary victory for the woman, the church. But it was not for long.

The wound was healed by the power of the emperor conquering the rebellions and bringing to an end the civil wars, and the power of the empire was augmented to such an extent that all the world wondered after the beast—the whole Roman world marvelled at the universal power of the empire.

2. *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?—13:4.* From this a dual pagan worship resulted. They worshipped both dragon and beast—that is, they worshipped one in the other. Thus, it becomes even more evident that the near death stroke to the empire was caused by the uprisings, rebellions and civil wars. But the empire survived the stroke, because *the wound was healed* when the insurrections and rebellions were conquered. This victory of the empire produced the pagan idolatry for the dragon and the beast, personified in the Roman emperor—hence, the worship of the emperor.

### (3) The blasphemies of the beast—13:5-10.

1. *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies—13:5.* With malignant satisfaction and gloating over the success of the conquests, the beast proclaimed an impious profanation against God—to *blaspheme his name*. The emperor not only opposed God, or spake derogatorily of God, but he blasphemed—desecrated the name, *Jehovah*, which was held in the ultimate degree of reverence by the Hebrews: “I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name *JEHOVAH* was I not known to them”—Ex. 6:3. This was God’s name—*my name*, the text says, and was indicative of the attributes of eternal and immutable self-existence: *I AM THAT I AM*—Ex. 3:14. It was this eternal and almighty name which was with arrogant imperial defiance blasphemed, assuming for



himself the attributes and prerogatives of God and commanding the worship of the emperor by all the world.

The *Jehovah* passage of Ex. 6:3 is one of sublimity. It is God's own declaration of omnipotent majesty. Moses stood before *Jehovah* in awe, and all men should stand in His august presence now, and should so honor Him in prayer, "Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting." Such sublime attributes forbid the lately modern forms of praying in degraded terms of familiarity with God—addressing God as if He were man, as one would address a human father. It is being said that to employ *Thee* and *Thou* in prayer is archaic and obsolete, and the sophisticated approach to God is to fling *you* into the face of his Divine Presence. But *thee* and *thou* are not obsolete in sacred literature, in poetry and in music. Shall the worshipper be more reverent in song than in prayer? These very proper words of address are current in sacred use in our literature, and are entirely literary in reverent character, and to replace *Thee* and *Thou* with *you* in songs of praise to God would be degrading to the "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" that we sing in "making melody with the heart unto God"—and it is just that degrading to prayer. Try it on such songs as "My Faith Looks Up To Thee, Thou Lamb Of Calvary" and "How Great Thou Art, How Great Thou Art"—and *feel* the difference! And in the experiment, try reading the Lord's prayer of John 17 substituting the *you* for *Thee* and *Thou*—read it and wince!

God is *Jehovah*, the great *I AM*, and to address Him in the common pronoun *you* is a degrading familiarity with God that is inexcusable. In prayer the reverent prostrated petitioner before His Throne should never talk *down* to God—prayer talks *up* to God. The Lord's command to call no man Father upon this earth prohibits addressing men as God, and it conversely forbids speaking to God as if He were man. The name *Jehovah* forbids familiarity. This humble writer could never bring himself to the point

of addressing God in prayer in the common term *you*. "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them."

The descriptions by Paul, in II Thessalonians 2:3-4, of the sacrilegious assumption of divine exaltation by the emperor for himself, parallels the visional representations of the same thing by John in Revelation. The Thessalonian passage refers to "that man of sin . . . the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." This passage as a reference to emperor Nero could not be made more obvious without actually calling his name; but for either Paul or John to mention the name of the living emperor in such connections would have accentuated the persecutions all over the empire—hence, the *code* language of these descriptions of verses 5 to 10.

2. *And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months—13:5.* Here is the third repetition of the *thousand two hundred and threescore days* of chapters eleven and twelve; and, as previously commented, it embraces the exact mathematical period from the date of Nero's order to Vespasian for the invasion of Judea to the fall of Jerusalem. This was the period of time assigned to the emperor-beast for the accomplishment of the destruction of Jerusalem and the obliteration of the Jewish state.

3. *To blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven—13:6.* The emperor's blasphemies of the name of God were extended to "*his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*" The *tabernacle* was the original name for the temple, and indicated the aim of the emperor to destroy it. The phrase "*them that dwell in heaven*" referred to the Jewish authorities, and signified the emperor's purpose to bring to end the Jewish state.

4. *It was given unto him to make war against the saints—13:7.* That power was given the devil to execute the

mission; indicating again the identity of the dragon and the beast in the persecution of the church—the dragon being personified in the emperor. He was thus represented as giving power to the beast-emperor as his instrument for the persecution of the church, to *overcome them* by the siege and destruction of Jerusalem the sacred city and holy temple.

The sweep of this diabolical power to exterminate extended beyond Jerusalem and Judea to *all kindred, and tongues, and nations*, and, after the destruction of Jerusalem the persecution spread over the whole empire.

5. *And all that dwell upon the face of the earth shall worship him—13:8.* In all the *places of the nations* (the symbolic meaning of *the earth*) within the empire the worship of the emperor prevailed under imperial edict—except, the faithful saints. It is declared that all “*whose names are not written in the book of life*” worshipped the emperor. But the saints who were “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10) did have their “names written in the book of life of the Lamb”; and they resisted the imperial decree, but suffered tribulation rather than worship the beast.

The reference made to the names *not written* in the book of the Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world,” has been misused to support the doctrine of election and reprobation—the elect and non-elect. But the contextual meaning is twofold: first, that God’s plan from the beginning included the slain Lamb, as all of the altars and types of the old dispensation symbolized; second, that from the beginning God has cataloged in heaven a registry of the faithful names from the first patriarchal servant of the old dispensations to the last suffering saint in the church of the Lamb.

6. *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 faith of the saints.—13:10.* After the declaration concerning the eternal plan of the ages, verse nine added: “*If any man have an ear, let him hear.*” This was a note calling solemn attention to the divine pronouncement of verse ten. This significant statement was

both a note of warning and a word of consolation: first, a warning that retribution would be administered to the persecutors who incarcerated in prison and killed with the sword the saints—they would suffer the vengeance of God, and experience the same evils which they inflicted on his church; it was the admonition to all of the churches that all who exercised the *patience and faith*, though they faced captivity and sword during the period of the dragon's rage, would ultimately have the reward—that promise which permeates the Revelation from John's signatory on Patmos, "your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," to the last note of comfort in the apocalypse, "He that testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly." Herein was "the patience and comfort of the saints," pausing for decision at the very threshold of prison and sword. In these words of the vision John called all the saints in the empire to courage and resignation in the face of imperial violence.

(4) The subordinate beast of the land—13:11-18.

1. *And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon*"—13:11. The environment of these visions is not in accord and cannot be forced into harmony with the labored effort to identify the second beast with religious Rome, the papacy or the Latin church. The beast symbol in the apocalypses of the Old Testament, as well as in Revelation, has stood for organized political world-power. The development of the Roman papacy was too distant—too far away—to fit into a context of such immediate character. There was constant emphasis on nearness, immediacy and shortness of time. The attempt to make the announcement of Jesus in Mark 1:14-15 that "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" refer to a yet future time could be no more inconsistent than to make "the time is at hand" in Revelation 1:3 encompass the "dark ages" and the end of time. When Peter said to the dispersed members of the church "the end of all things is at hand" (I Pet. 4:7), he referred to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state as being near—it was impending. When

Paul said to Timothy (II Tim. 4:6) "the time of my departure is at hand" he meant that his decease was near. It does not aid the argument to assert that the statement of John in Revelation means the beginning of these events for John did not say these things must begin—he said, *must shortly come to pass*—and *the time* for them to *come to pass* was *at hand*.

Premillennialists in the church attempt the same evasion by admitting that the kingdom announced by John and Jesus was "at hand" and that it *began* on Pentecost, but claiming that its ultimate growth would be in the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. For some who are opposed to the millennial contention to fall into the same method of argumentation is but to help the cause of millennial heresy. In neither case can the expression *at hand* be stretched beyond immediate points of the two declarations—the immediate events.

John was no more entranced to write the history of the Latin church and the Dark Ages than he was inspired to prophesy the discovery of the North American continent, the organization of the United States, the formation of Southern Confederacy or the existence of the United Nations! The historical events of far distant future whether the papacy, the pope, Martin Luther or Alexander Campbell are all outside the scope of Revelation. And we need not go outside the provincial governments of Judea and the Palestinian representatives of the Roman emperor to identify the second beast—*the beast of the land*—and find the fulfillment of the visions concerning him.

Verse eleven states that this second beast came up out of earth, or the land—from whence he received the designation *the beast of the land*. Because the events surrounded Jerusalem and the Jewish state; and *the land* in this vision meant the land of Palestine—especially Judea—and beast is the symbol of the Jewish persecutors in Palestine.

That this second beast of the land was a satellite of the first beast of the sea is seen in the statements that he *caused the earth*—the people of Palestine—to worship the sea beast, and this second beast derived the only exercise of his authority from the first beast, and worshipped him.

The first beast, of the sea, was the Roman empire, personified in the emperor; the second beast, of the land, was personified in the ruling persecutors of Palestine, who were the instruments of the Roman emperor to execute his authority and power. This is further symbolized in the fact that this second beast had horns like a lamb but spake as a dragon—*deceiving them that dwell on the earth* to worship the image of the emperor.

There is nothing in these descriptions to fit the much later emergence of the papacy and its popes. The beasts represent the world-power of Rome. The beast from the sea was the emperor; and the beast of the land was the subordinate rulers of Palestine, exercising delegated power, as the emperor's representatives.

2. *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*—13:12. The salient points in the description of the land beast in verses eleven through eighteen, verse by verse, may be outlined in brief as follows:

Verse 11: He was from the earth, or land, not from the sea—denoting the local persecutors of Palestine. He was a false prophet visualized as a lamb in appearance, but speaking as the dragon. The *two horns* of the lamb represented two notorious rulers which Josephus mentioned (in *Antiquities*, Book XX 11, 1; and *Wars*, Book II, Chapters 14-15) as being sent by Nero, the emperor, into Palestine as his representatives. This beast appeared as guileless as a lamb, but as a false prophet he possessed the infernal spirit of the sea-beast, and deceived *the land*—the people of Palestine—into the worship of the sea beast, the emperor.

Verse 12: He was a mere satellite of the sea beast, whose wound of rebellion and civil war within the ten-kingdom empire *was healed* by the sheer power of force. This power brought all kingdoms and provinces under submission to the Roman head. The second beast as a servile

and menial instrument of the first beast, enforced his will, exercising an authority not his own, but was derived solely from the superior beast number one, the Roman emperor. In this subservience the land beast in obedience to sea beast, "*causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast*"—the emperor. The *earth* referred to the provincial governments; and *them that dwell therein* had reference to the people who were under their political rule. The grievous blow inflicted on the empire by civil wars was referred to as a deadly wound on the sea-beast which had been healed by his conquering power; and this brought the kings, governors, and people into submission to worship the emperor.

Verse 13: He performed visional pseudo-signs, which were not actual, in order to deceive, such as Jesus foretold (Matt. 24:24) would precede the destruction of Jerusalem; and such as Paul described (II Thess. 2:3-9) as characteristic of the pretensions of "the man of sin and son of perdition." The *wonders* were merely the magical machinations of the Roman emperor-beast to deceive. Josephus relates that two representatives of Nero, by the names of Albinus and Gessius Florus, in this very period, were sent into the land, and being notorious for wickedness they made pompous ostentations before the people. (*Antiquities*, Book XX, II, I) These are facts recorded by the eye-witness historian on the scene of things; and there could be no more fitting fulfillment of the two horns of this beast.

Verse 14: He was identified with the *false prophet* by his utterance of pseudo-prophecy, of which deceptions Jesus also warned (Matt. 24:11) as a portent of the destruction of Jerusalem; and which Paul (II Thess. 2:9-12) declared would characterize *that wicked* (one) . . . "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness . . . that they should believe a lie." The events prior and posterior to the fall of Jerusalem are so consonant with the anticipations of Jesus (Matt. 24) and of Paul (II Thess. 2) that it is utterly unimaginative to gaze into the future centuries for successively occurring events in both secular and

ecclesiastical history to fulfill them. The only apparent explanation for it is that the theories of historical theology require it, and they have been taken for granted so long as to have become so fixed in the thinking that they have been accepted as factual. No events of the future can be created or can occur to harmonize more compatibly with these scriptural apocalypses and apostolic descriptions of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state. Added to the biblical facts, the histories of Josephus, Pliny, Eusebius and other annals of the times and the near times, verify them.

Verse 15: The second beast created a life image of the superior beast, and exercised the power given to him to command its worship. In verse 14, it is stated that this was made possible by the prestige of the sea-beast from "the wound by a sword" but "did live"—that is, the display of the power of the empire in subduing in war the rebellious provinces, brought to the emperor an idolatrous worship, which the land-beast (the emperor's representative in Palestine) promoted, and in which he participated; and he commanded the Christians who would not worship the emperor to be banished or slain—which introduced the martyrdom of the saints.

Verse 16: He compelled the people of all stations *small and great, rich and poor, free and bond* to submit to the edict of emperor-worship—which symbolized *the mark of the beast*. This visional mark was an evil emblem of submission to emperor-worship. It was the stigmatic badge of the beast stamped *in their right hand, or in their forehead*, signifying a binding oath of loyalty. All who conformed to the imperial orders received the mark of the beast, personified in the Roman emperor—the *Neronic anti-Christ*.

Verse 17: He compelled all the subjects of the provinces to bear *the mark of the beast* by an economic warfare, *that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or name of the beast, or the number of his name*



—the enforcement of a maniacally rigorous interdict, an imperial boycott that would make life impossible for all who refused to wear the stigmatic name of the demonic emperor. By such means the provincial procurators forced all of their subjects into abject submission to the imperial edict of emperor-worship, which was the *mark* or *badge* of the Satanic beast—the emperor. Thus the *mark of the beast* simply meant to yield and bow to the edicts of the Roman emperor to worship his image.

(5) The mystic number of the beast—13:17.

*“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.”* The fact that the mystic number was assigned to the first beast, or sea-beast, shows that the second beast, or land-beast, had no independent power or authority, but was the minion of the emperor. This land-beast, as previously indicated, represented the Jewish persecutors in Jerusalem and Judea, but performed no official acts without the consent, permission and authority of the sea-beast, the Roman emperor.

The introduction to verse 18, *Here is wisdom*, points to the cryptic character of the following statement, *let him that understandeth count the number of the beast*—that being the code number of *six hundred sixty six*. It is a basic truth that the book of Revelation was written in code, on the same principle that the army communicates messages in code intended only for the military personnel, but to be withheld from the public. For the same purpose the contents of Revelation were composed in code for the vital information and concealed instruction to the churches facing the impending persecutions; but to be withheld from the pagan Roman world. There were in all of the churches the spiritually endowed teachers, who possessed the “spiritual gifts” of the inspiration era, as recorded in chapters twelve and thirteen of First Corinthians. In the catalog of such gifts were listed the special endowments of “wisdom,” “discernment,” and “understanding.” This agrees with the words

of the text, *here is wisdom*, and let him that hath understanding count the number. These supernaturally endowed teachers in the churches could certainly decipher the cryptogram.

It has been established that the beast was the Roman empire, personified in the living emperor. It is so evident as to be patent that to mention the name of the living emperor in these connections would have been disastrous to the church—it would have precipitated a premature onslaught against Christians which could have resulted in their complete obliteration in every part of the Roman empire.

A cryptogram is a writing in ciphers, or secret letters, with symbolic figures and representations having a hidden significance. Cryptography is the art of writing in secret characters. A cryptographer is one who has mastered the skill of deciphering or decoding the mystic letters.

The prophets and teachers in the New Testament churches were not professional cryptographers, but being the recipients of “spiritual gifts” by apostolic impartation, they possessed inspired powers to discern that which the ordinary mind could not discover. It is not without reason that I Cor. 12:8 and I Cor. 13:2 would include the necessary power to decipher the code of Rev. 13:18 to the members of the churches involved in these calamitous developments and trying experiences, which were so immediately present with them, but so remotely past to us.

There have been almost a legion of names in many different languages that have been deciphered in the efforts to find solution for Code 666, ranging from the merest conjecture to a frantic religious fanaticism that borders on lunacy. The names of ancient political war lords, medieval papal pontiffs, together with nineteenth and twentieth century dictators, have been juggled to yield the sum 666. But a far-fetched and fantastic solution is neither satisfying nor sufficient. It must be relevant to the text and the context.

There is such a solution in the official appellation of *Nero Caesar*. The designation of this emperor as yielding the 666 code is actually found in the rabbinical writings.

Inasmuch as John was writing for the information and instruction of Hebrew Christians, it is appropriate and expedient that the code name for the Roman beast should be hidden in Hebrew ciphers, thus less likely to be discovered by the pagan authorities into whose hands the Revelation might come; and whereas the Roman empire was the beast of verses 1-8, the numerical name must of contextual necessity designate the one in whom the empire was personified. No name could be more conclusive and decisive than that of Nero Caesar—the ruling emperor.

The Hebrew tongue was employed in chapter 16:16 in the symbol of Armageddon, and for less reason than justifies Hebrew ciphers in this case. In chapter 17:11 the beast was visualized as the sixth ruling emperor in succession from Julius Caesar. Though Julius was the head of the Republic, before the empire was actually formed, nevertheless the Republic merged into the empire; and it was from Julius Caesar, the first of the imperial rulers of Rome, that the title *Caesar* passed to his successors. Josephus mentions Julius as the first in the line of Caesars. The eminent Philip Schaff, in his Bible Dictionary, records that the imperial title descended from Julius Caesar. The original Speaker's Bible Commentary, published by the order of the English Parliament, states that Professor Bryce, of Oxford, had justly placed Julius Caesar, from whom the name Caesar passed on to his successors, as first of the imperial rulers of Rome. These and many other ancient and modern historians and scholars count the imperial rulers from Julius Caesar. This fact has a decisive bearing on the pre-destruction-of-Jerusalem chronology of Revelation.

It is a rather strange process that would omit the original Caesar in order to qualify another than Nero for the ruling emperor when Revelation was composed. The line of the first six Caesars was as follows: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. The sixth emperor, according to chapter seventeen, was ruling—and he was Nero, as will be later propounded.

It is so signified as to be conclusive that the Hebrew consonants in the official name *Nero Caesar* form the exact

numerical figure of *six hundred sixty six*. It is also factual that Irenaeus in the early second century mentioned this solution to the numerical appellation. He further mentioned that some of the old manuscripts computed the number to be *six hundred sixteen*, and a current abbreviated form of writing the name of Nero among the Hebrews formed exactly that figure—*six hundred sixteen*.

These facts are but further proof that it was the common understanding among the Hebrews that Nero was the intended character.

The proof of the numerical meaning of the Hebrew letters is available in the Hebrew alphabet, and they are not difficult to decipher. In the order of the official title of Nero Caesar it would be as follows numerically: 50-200-6-50-100-60-20=666.

The *International Critical Commentary* on Revelation states, along with other scholars quoted, that the solution is to be found in Hebrew, not in Greek, and that Nero Caesar is the man of the number.

There could have been no way more effective or plausible for John to withhold the meaning of this code from the public, but also to bring it within the perception of the oppressed churches, than to conceal it in their native Hebrew, to be deciphered by the spiritual discerners in the churches, who were evidently signified in verse 18: *Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast and here is wisdom*—that is, the answer to the mystic number is in the imparted *wisdom* of the spiritually gifted prophets and teachers in the churches.

So in the search for a figurative beast to fit the symbolic numerical name—why skip that old Roman beast! He was there in the midst of it all, and he is relevant to the text and context. To ignore that period and assign these events to the future, is the same mistake committed by the modern pseudo-prophets, who gather an armful of Old Testament prophecies, skip the New Testament fulfillment completely, and assign the prophecies by sheer assertion to a future fulfillment. Essentially the same process is employed, inadvertently and unintentionally when the symbols of Revelation are assigned to future centuries.

There could be no more natural application of this symbolic number than the name of the Roman emperor, and the most exacting analyst could not demand a more fitting solution. But the historical "dark ages" interpretation is not only unconvincing, it is lacking in relevancy and coherency, and is anachronistic.

## V

### THE DISCLOSURES OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS (Chapter 14)

"1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 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 firstfruits 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. 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. 12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. 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."

The fact necessary to remember and observe in perusing the book of Revelation is that the entire Revelation was a visional pageantry of the oppressions of the church by imperial heathen persecuting powers during the time of the then existing powers and the life of the then existing churches. The verbs employed in its terminology are such as *was* and *saw*, but that is characteristic of both visional and prophetic expression. An exact example is found in

Isaiah 9:2: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light hath shined." This prophetic passage is quoted by the Lord in Matthew 4:16, as being fulfilled by his coming into the world, yet it was spoken seven hundred years before his earthly advent. This is so throughout the book of Revelation; it was composed a decade or more prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; before several other epistles of the New Testament were written; and was a description of the events of the ten emperor period from Nero to Diocletian, yet its language was largely in past and present tenses, as though the events were current.

The fourteenth chapter appears to be an intentional prolepsis—the dating of events out of chronological order—in that the scenes of judgment indicated the end of conflict and tribulation, whereas the following chapter reverted to the war against the church in accentuated fury. Thus the entire fourteenth chapter was of a proleptic character. The development in order of the progressive descriptions of successive events was abandoned for the in-between scenes of the outcome in the victory of the saints and of judgment on the persecuting powers. The chapter's imagery is that of the defeat of the three great foes of the church—the dragon, the sea-beast and the land-beast; followed by scenes of victory for the woman (the church), and of judgment on her foes.

(1) The hundred forty-four thousand—14:1-5.

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—14:1.* The Lamb standing on mount Zion was Christ; and mount Zion was the symbol of the new Jerusalem, where the new covenant was inaugurated, and where the church was established; and which Paul declared, in Gal. 4:26, to be the mother of us all. This heavenly Jerusalem was held in contrast with the old outward and earthly Jerusalem which here was representative of Judaism with all of its apostasies.

This new mount Zion was the seat of the new spiritual temple, as the dwelling of the New Testament church, described in chapter 11:19 as “measured off for them that worship there”—the *firstfruits*, further mentioned by Paul as the firstborn, in Heb. 12:22-23: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

The *hundred forty-four thousand* was the numerical symbol for that great number of saints *which were redeemed from the earth*. These were the martyred number of the woman's seed, designated in chapter twelve as the *man child* which was *caught up unto God* in contrast with the *remnant* or *rest* of the woman's seed which *remained* on the earth to suffer tribulation, but not martyrdom. It is stated that this grand group of the *hundred forty-four* were *redeemed from the earth*—they represented the select company of martyrs, purchased by the blood of martyrdom, and having been *redeemed from the earth* they therefore belonged to heaven where they had been *caught up unto God*. These redeemed thousands with the Lamb had *his Father's name written in their foreheads* in contrast with not having the mark of the beast *in their hands and on their foreheads*. It was their badge of identification and mark of distinction.

The number *hundred forty-four thousand* was based on the mathematical calculation of twelve times twelve, as a symbolic reference to the twelve patriarchs of the old dispensation and the twelve apostles of the new covenant, and the number signified the full number of martyred saints. Here again the proleptic character of this chapter was applied, in that the full number of martyrs were visualized in the midst of rather than at the end of the scenes of death by martyrdom, which followed in the succeeding chapters. This chapter therefore abandoned the orderly succession of the events for the between scenes view of the final victory of the saints and judgment of the beasts.



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—* 14:2-3. The voice from heaven was in unison, and symbolized the same triumphant chorus of victory over the forces of the dragon, as in chapters eleven and twelve. The voice which John heard was *as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and as the voice of harpers with their harps.*

It has been asserted that the reference to *harps* and *harpers* here justifies the employment of mechanical musical instrumentation in the worship of the church. But a symbol never symbolizes itself, and a type cannot typify itself. Moreover, the scene is that of the spirits of the redeemed from the earth—and heaven is the home of the soul. What use could a redeemed spirit make of a material instrument? It is worse than folly—it is crass stupidity—to make a such literal application of figurative language.

The description is a comparison, indicated by the conjunctive adverb *as*. The voice of unison in the vision was heard *singing* this new song of triumph before the throne of the Lamb. In the perfection of rhythm it was *as the flowing of many waters*; in the mighty volume it was *as the peal of great thunders*; in the sweetness of melody, it was *as if it were attuned to the strings of an hundred and forty-four thousand harps*. The Greek text has the same adverb *as* with the harpers as with the waters and thunders—*as harpers harping with their harps*. It was the song of the myriad thousand, which *no man could learn*—which only the redeemed chorus could sing; it was not a song of worship on earth, but a refrain of triumph known only to the select company of martyrs and which belonged only to the throng *before the throne*. It was beyond all human imagination or contemplation.

3. *These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins . . . which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, these were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God . . . in their mouth no guile . . . without fault before the throne of God—* 14:4-5.

These verses were a further description of this group of redeemed martyrs, of their spiritual purity while they dwelt among men, before they were *caught up unto God*. Their virtues were extolled for the impression on the members of the churches in midst of pagan influences and surroundings.

Though these martyred saints were in the visional sphere of glory in the triumph of the persecuted cause—their character on the earth before they ascended unto God was an exemplification of the spiritual purity which should be maintained by all who remained under the evil influences of pagan surroundings in the world. There is no distinction in character between the saints in heaven and the saints on earth.

(2) The three angels of judgment—14:6-12.

1. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people—14:6.* This angel of proclamation symbolized the evangelism of the world with the gospel, and was paralleled with the angels of Matt. 24:31, who were to be sent “to gather his elect from the four winds of the earth,” after the destruction of Jerusalem. The message of *the everlasting gospel* of this Revelation angel was the same *gospel of the kingdom* of Matt. 24:14, 31—which was preached by the angels who gathered the elect *from one end of heaven to the other*, after the destruction of Jerusalem. These angels of Revelation, as of Matthew twenty-four, symbolized gospel emissaries, and both passages (Matt. 24:31 and Rev. 14:6) referred to the universal expansion of Christianity which followed the downfall of Judaism. The *end* mentioned in Matt. 24:14—“and then shall the end come”—undoubtedly had reference to the end of the Jewish state and the termination of the period of the persecution by the rulers of Rome and Judea.

The visions of Revelation are again seen to be an extension of the Lord’s abbreviated account of the same events

in Matthew the twenty-fourth chapter, both of which were the delineations of the war against the Jews, the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and of the terrible tribulation which the churches sustained and survived.

The evangelistic angel of verse 6 had *the everlasting gospel to preach . . . to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*, while the angels of Matt. 24:31 were sent *to gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*. The events were the same, the angels were the same, their evangelistic mission and gospel message were the same, the symbolism was the same and the period the visions covered was the same—the time of trial and tribulation of the churches during the war against Jerusalem, with all of the events connected with its downfall and the subsequent persecution of the church.

The apocalyptist here envisions the immediate post-persecution unrestrained proclamation of the gospel. The angelic evangel was seen flying “in the midst of heaven”—that is, in the domain of the civil governments and political authorities that had waged the persecution against the church. But the persecutors were seen as having been defeated and the period of persecution as having ended, and the angel emissary was seen heralding the *everlasting* gospel to the people of the whole Roman world. It was the gospel which imperial power could not destroy, which had survived bloodshed and martyrdom—the *everlasting* and *universal* gospel then to be preached “unto them that dwell on the earth” (Judea and Palestine), where the saints had been killed, and “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (the whole region of the persecuting powers). It is the same universal, indestructible, everlasting gospel today.

2. *Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come*—14:7. The loud proclamation of this angel was a strong expression of the truth that the gospel has a message of fear and condemnation as well as of joy and salvation.

The message of the evangelistic angel is concluded with the exhortation to *worship him that made heaven, and*

*earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.* These words declare that God is over every realm of the activities of the two beasts—the emperor and his satellite rulers—and that all should acknowledge and worship him.

3. *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication—* 14:8. The *second angel* of this vision was the angel of *doom*—signifying the message of doom on Babylon—which here referred to apostate Jerusalem—and the eminent fall of the once holy city.

In chapter 11:8 apostate Jerusalem was designated spiritually as Egypt and Sodom to symbolize her state of apostasy. The reference to Jerusalem was made indisputable by the identifying phrase “where also our Lord was crucified.” The prophet Isaiah referred to apostate Jerusalem as “the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.” (Isa. 1:21) The Lord’s lament over the spiritual desolation of Jerusalem is recorded in Matt. 23:34-37, climaxed with the impassioned appeal: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”

The name Babylon had come to symbolize the ultimate in corruption, and the fallen Babylon of verse 8 is figurative of the spiritual degradation of Jerusalem—“the faithful city turned harlot,” and “which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” Rome was never “a faithful city” to “turn harlot,” but these phrases are a fitting description of Jerusalem before and during the time of Christ.

The *fornication* of verse 8 compares with the use of the same term in reference to Israel’s unfaithfulness to God in their Old Testament history. The *wine of the wrath of her fornication* denoted the drunkenness of spiritual idolatry resulting from *the wine of wrath*, the evil deeds of which

called down the condemnation of God which brought the end in the destruction of the city and its temple.

4. *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark—14:9.* The third angel of this apocalypse was the angel of *judgment*—the symbol of solemn warning against the worship of the beast, and receiving his mark.

As has been previously shown the beast of the land (in Palestine) obeyed the beast of the sea (the Roman emperor) and caused all the people to worship the Roman emperor whose image was the object of idolatry. This image worship was the mark of the beast. Having this mark inscribed in the forehead or in the hand was symbolic of its binding power, as an inviolable oath of allegiance. This particular announcement of the angel is not a pronouncement of judgment on the beasts, but rather a warning against the beast-worship and the condemnation that would come to all men everywhere who thereby received his mark.

5. *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—14:10.* The strong fermentation of wine used for liquors was often made more savory and agreeable to the taste by additives of certain spices or ingredients. But *the wine of the wrath of God* upon the idolaters of the imperial image worship would be *poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation*—the wrath of God unmingled with clemency and without mitigation would be their condemnation. The worshipers of the imperial beast would share the same judgment pronounced upon him.

The elements of the torment meted out to the idolatrous worshipers of the beast was figuratively described as *fire and brimstone*. The inflammable mineral known in that day as brimstone was sulphuric in content, and when burning emitted a suffocating smell. It was used to describe the torment of the wicked—symbolic of the ultimate degree of remorse and anguish. It was no less fearful when put in the words of Paul in Rom. 2:8-9: "Indignation and wrath,

tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." It means that the punishment of the wicked will consist of vexation of spirit, distress of mind, remorse of conscience, and anguish of soul.

6. *The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever 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*—14:11. The duration of the condemnation on the idolatrous worship of the Roman beast was expressed in these terms of equal fear in the fateful words of this text.

The phrase *forever and ever* always meant endless. The single term *forever* may refer to a period of time—and though it must include all of the period to which it refers, it is limited to the duration of that period. On the other side of time, in eternity, there will be no time limitations; therefore, the words *forever* and *everlasting* and *eternal* (all from the same Greek term *aionious*) when used in reference to reward or punishment beyond this life must denote that which is without end. But when *ever and ever* are joined together in *forever and ever*, there is never a modification—it always means *endless*. So doctrinally, respecting the duration of the future punishment of the wicked, these verses carry no intimation of any limitation. Not only so—there is no cessation: *and they have no rest day nor night*—that is, no recess from torment, no release from punishment. The torment of the beast was to be interminable and without intermission.

### (3) The beatitudes of the martyrs—14:12-13.

1. *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus*—14:12. The apocalyptist deviates here from warnings and judgements to speak words of encouragement to the beleaguered saints in need of heartening encouragement. The statement *here is the patience of the saints* means that the existing conditions presented the opportunity to exhibit patience even unto death. In contrast with the mark of the beast received by the disloyal, they would have the distin-

guished mark of the saints in sustained and persistent faithfulness during the continuing persecution. The refusal to worship the beast (the emperor), or his image (where-soever it appeared or on whatsoever it should be inscribed) exemplified the faithfulness couched in the words *they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*.

2. *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 labors; and their works do follow them—14:13.* This passage has been truly named the beatitude of Revelation. It appears to have an identification with chapter 20:6: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." Both passages referred to the martyrs—and here again the proleptic element of chapter fourteen is seen in verse thirteen, as the scene depicted was ahead of the orderly developments of the apocalypse; in that this benediction on the death of the martyrs chronologically belonged at the end; and was therefore a prolepsis with the other events of chapter fourteen.

There is a remarkable variation in the form of address in verse thirteen. Instead of the usual form of *seeing* the vision of events, John was represented in this verse as *hearing* a command. The commanding voice said, *Write*. It was a special voice giving an order, not by vision, but by direct command to write it down.

As stated, this verse along with Revelation 20:6 was a martyr scene: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth"—meaning from then on in martyrdom. They belonged to the martyred group—the aggregation of the *man child* "caught up unto God"; the *hundred forty-four thousand* "redeemed from the earth." They were the dead who had died *in the Lord*—in the cause for which they were martyrs.

The beatitude of the Spirit was: *That they may rest from their labors*—that is, from the travail of persecution—and *their works do follow them*. There was a descriptive distinction here in their *labors* and their *works*. The *labors*

referred to the parturition of birth—the travail, the pain, of bringing forth the *man child*; hence, *labors* had reference to the rigors of the persecution unto death, or martyrdom. The *works* referred to their righteous acts in the midst of the period of torture and trial. These works, *saith the Spirit* “. . . *do follow them.*” Their deeds of faith and fidelity in the unfaltering performance of their prime duty followed on after their martyrdom to abide with, comfort and encourage *the rest of the seed*—the remnant that remained on the earth—as though the martyrs by these righteous acts were yet among them. In that way one’s righteous lives and deeds yet follow on among men after they are transported from this earth on which we dwell.

These blessed dead had been swept from the earth in martyrdom, dying in the cause of the Lord, and though they had been “caught up unto God” and “lived and reigned with Christ” in a state of victory, they nevertheless remained in the spirit of their works with those who were left on the earth to face the next stages of the violent drama of persecution.

Since the subjects of the Spirit’s beatitude were represented as having died in the Lord, manifestly the object of the beatitude was to strengthen, encourage and uphold the living in their darkest hour. In that way it may be appropriately applied to the church today. Loyalty to Christ in any generation requires the full measure of the martyr spirit of courage and endurance, and martyrdom in its worst does not always result in immediate death. We may all possess the soul of a martyr, and in that spirit we *live in the Lord*, as the blessed dead had died in Him.

(4) The harvest of grain and vintage—14:14-20.

From the beatitude of the blessed dead in verse 13, the apocalypse turns to symbols of reward and retribution respectively for the living in the earth. As before repeated, the *earth* in Revelation imagery referred to the land of which Jerusalem was the center—Judea and all of Palestine, the scene of these visions of the persecuted church. The harvest of the grain symbolized the rich reward for the faithful still living in the church; the vintage of grapes



signified retribution of the wrath of God for the enemies of the church.

Indulging here in repetition, it is necessary to keep in perspective the fact that this fourteenth chapter is a *prolepsis*—an interposition between the parts of the apocalypse, relating events out of sequence, on the order of reading the last chapter of a novel first to see how the story ends. So this latter part of chapter fourteen envisioned scenes at the end of the apocalypse of the compensations of reward for the faithfulness of the saints in symbols of reaping the harvest of grain; then the retribution of wrath for the oppressors of the church represented by casting the vintage of grapes into the winepress. With these essential considerations in mind, the latter part of this chapter may be epitomized as follows:

1. The *Son of man* on the white cloud was Jesus Christ. He alone is called by that title in Revelation—and in one other place only, in the vision of the golden candlesticks of chapter 1:13. The *white cloud* of this chapter was the same symbol as was mentioned by the Lord himself in Matt. 24:30: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” It identifies the Revelation symbol with the Lord’s description of the destruction of Jerusalem. The passage in Matthew 24 states that “all the tribes of the earth shall mourn,” which is parallel with Revelation 1:7: “Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him: and all the tribes of the earth shall wail (mourn) because of him.” As mentioned in the comments on this verse in chapter 1, the passages had reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the mourning of all Jewish tribes and families all over the world, because of that calamity which had befallen their city and their state in the destruction and desolation of Jerusalem.

There is a further parallel between the vision of chapters 6:2 and 14:14. Christ was the Rider of the white horse vision of chapter 6, and He was the Reaper of the white cloud vision of chapter 14—both visions being the

scenes of triumphant procedure, picturing the conquering of the imperial persecutor and his minions.

The Son of man had in his hand *a golden crown*—the symbol of the highest royalty, identifying him as the King of heaven, above all potentates of the earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He had in his hand *a sharp sickle*—the symbol of reaping. The sickle was a harvesting implement comparable to the scythe of our time, which was unknown in scripture language. They are both instruments swung by hand in the mowing of ripened grain. The one sitting on the white cloud had come to reap *the harvest of the earth*—meaning Jerusalem and Judea.

2. The Son of man employs the ministry of angels to execute his will. One angel *came out of the temple* and signaled to the One on the cloud to *thrust in thy sickle and reap*. This was not an order from a superior voice, but the signal for the reaping to begin. It was significant that this angel *came out of the temple*—symbolizing the sanctuary that had been the object of destruction and desecration in the war against the Jews, which resulted in the fall of Jerusalem.

The voice of the angel proclaimed: *the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe*. (Verse 15) This angelic pronouncement signified that the events had approached the end—not the end of time but the end of Jerusalem, of the Jewish state, and of Judaism—and this doom was signified in the declaration: *And the earth was reaped*—14:16.

*Another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sickle in his hand*—14:17. There was a distinction between the two angels and the two temples; the first angel came out of the temple which symbolized the sanctuary of the Jews, and was a proclaimer, having no sickle in his hand; the second angel came out of the temple *which is in heaven*, the abode of God, with a sickle in his hand, symbolizing a minister with power to execute judgment.

A third angel *came out from the altar* saying to the angel that had the sickle: *Thrust in thy sharp sickle and*

*gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe*—14:18. This angel from the altar undoubtedly signified the answer to the cry of the martyrs under the altar of Chapter 6:9-10: "How long, O Lord, how long, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" The Lord replied that "they should rest (wait) yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Now, the vision of these angels in chapter 14, sees the role of the martyrs in the visions completed and finished. The angel *from the altar* was seen answering the souls *under the altar* (chapter 6:9-10), and he made an announcement to the angel with the sickle that time had come to avenge the martyrs. With these signals the Son of man reaped the earth of its harvest of grain, and his ministering angel gathered the vintage of grapes. Here was a double vision: the *harvesting of grain* and the *gathering of vintage*. With the double vision there was the double instrument of reaping and pruning. It signified reward and retribution. The harvest of grain represented the gathering of the faithful saints, and the vintage of grapes the crushing of their wicked oppressors. The symbols are comparable to the Lord's illustration of the wheat and the chaff, to the extent of the imagery of reward and retribution.

3. The angel of judgment *gathered the clusters of the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God*—14:19. This was the vision of the terrible wrath of God that would be administered to the persecutors of His people.

The winepress of ancient time was an excavation in rock, formed in the ground, and lined with masonry, in which to crush the grapes. Another cavity was made in the proper place and shape to receive the juice. Such excavations are even yet to be found in Palestine and Syria. The treading of the winepress was performed with the feet, the red juice of the grapes flowing like blood. The reference to it was the symbolic description of the war against Jerusalem: *And the winepress was trodden without the city,*

*and blood came from the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six furlongs—14:20.* This was a description of the Roman armies gathered outside the city as God's agents of retribution against Judah and Jerusalem for their apostasies. The context presents a dual vision. First, the two beasts of the sea and of the land were symbolic of the combined effort of Roman and minion persecutors to destroy the church. These two persecutors were the objects of divine indignation in this vision of *the great winepress of the wrath of God*. Second, the fallen Babylon of verse 8 was Jerusalem—*the faithful city turned harlot*.

The symbolic description of these scenes envisioned the terrible war against Jerusalem, when the Roman armies gathered *outside the city to tread Jerusalem as the winepress*. The *blood* that came out of the winepress *even unto the horse bridles* signified the horrible slaughter, as though the battle horses waded in blood to their bridles. This was the vivid apocalyptic hyperbole of wrath so great and terrible that was administered to Judah and Jerusalem by the Romans in the Jewish war.

4. In the closing scene of this chapter *the great winepress of the wrath of God* would envelop the entire land of the Jews—the whole of Palestine. The last phrase of 14:20 declares that *the winepress was trodden without the city . . . by the space of a thousand and six furlongs*. Mathematically computed that distance was the approximate length of the land of Palestine, and it was symbolic of the deluge of blood over the whole land during the siege of Jerusalem, and the war against the Jews, which ended with destruction of the city, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism and the final end of the Jewish state. It was the fearful vision of the inevitable and inexorable judgment of God against an incorrigible nation.

## VI.

THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE LAST PLAGUES  
(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.”

With this chapter the successive order of the visional events were resumed, as connected with the end of chapter *thirteen*, where the prolepsis of chapter *fourteen* had broken the continuity of the visions by projecting the symbols into the final scenes of the judgments of God executed against the apostate city and the oppressors of the saints.

In order to re-establish connection between chapters *thirteen* and *fifteen*, observe again that the first beast (of the sea) symbolized the Roman empire, personified in the ruling emperor; and the second beast (of the land) symbolized his Palestinian minions who compelled the in-

habitants of Palestine to worship the image of the imperial beast, and caused all who refused to thus receive the mark of the imperial image-worship to be killed. In the course of these visional events the faithful saints were slain, and chapter *thirteen* ended with the full and complete roll of the martyred saints. The interposed prolepsis of chapter *fourteen* introduced a vision of the whole martyred number, symbolized by *an hundred forty-four thousand* "redeemed from the earth," and the visions were projected beyond the intervening chapters to the end. That chapter (14) therefore must be studied as an interlude preview of the final consummation of all events. But chapter *fifteen* reverted to the vision of events in the order of the sequence and succession that was interrupted at the end of chapter *thirteen*, thus re-establishing the orderly connection.

The contents of chapter fifteen may now be arranged as follows:

(1) The sign of the seven angels—15:1-2.

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.*—15:1. The "sign in heaven" carried the same import as observed in previous comments on other visions and in the Lord's own preview of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matt. 24:31. What was here envisioned in *heaven* (the sphere of authorities) was carried out on *earth* (among the inhabitants of Palestine) with special reference to Judah and Jerusalem.

The seven angels with the seven vials and plagues formed a visional recapitulation of the seven seals and trumpets of the first series of visions—the difference existed in the central figures of the visions. The first series surrounded Christ, the Lamb; the second series surrounded the church, his Bride. The second series, though repetitive, was also a progressive development of the events in an enlargement of judicial punishments inflicted on the empire-beast.

The seven plagues in the hands of the seven angels were contained in seven vials, as mentioned in verse 7, and this

chapter had the effect of an introduction to the pouring out of the plagues contained in the vials of the following chapter.

In reference to the seven vials, verse 1 stated that *in them is filled up the wrath of God*, which indicated the fulfillment of time. The function of the seven angels therefore was to execute the seven plagues in the series of cosmic woes to be poured out on the *earth*—the land of the Jews.

The visions of these final plagues, or woes, anticipated the overthrow of apostate Jerusalem, referred to previously as the fall of the harlot Babylon. Later, the same seven angels were seen showing to John the new Jerusalem emerging as the spiritual Jerusalem in contrast with the old apostate Jerusalem.

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—15:2.* Here was the vision of a crystal sea, with the transparency of glass, signifying that the impending events were soon to be manifest. The mingling of fire in the crystal denoted the consuming judgment of God soon to descend upon the beast and his minions. Standing on the crystal sea were the host of martyrs “that had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name . . . having the harps of God,” and they sang “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” The reference to the song of Moses indicated that the elements of this vision were formed from the deliverance of Israel and were a comparison with the Red Sea, which swallowed up Pharoah and his hosts. The saints had “gotten victory” over the emperor-beast as Israel was victorious over Pharoah; and as Israel sang the triumphant “song of Moses” standing by the sea; so these saints also, standing on the sea, sang “the song of Moses and the Lamb.” It was Pharoah there, and the emperor here; the victorious Israelites there, the triumphant saints here; it was oppressed Israel delivered from Egypt there, the persecuted saints “redeemed from the earth.”

The reference to the Egyptian Pharoah in comparison with the Roman emperor was made clear by the mention of "the song of Moses, the servant of God" and "them that had gotten victory over the beast, over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name"—the language identifies *Pharoah Rameses* and *Nero Caesar*.

The mention of the victorious host *having the harps of God*, as in chapter *fourteen*, could not be literal any more than the angels and martyred saints could be physical. The harps here, as in preceding visions, were the symbol of the perfect melodious harmony of the grand symphony of redeemed voices singing "the song of Moses and the Lamb" in exultant victory, standing on the crystal sea; as Israel in the exodus sang "the song of Moses," standing by the sea. The analogy drawn enforced the relation between the oppression and deliverance of Israel in the Old Testament, and the persecution and victory of the church in the New Testament. The symbols and apocalypses were parallel, and must be so applied. Otherwise the New Testament history of the early oppressions of the church loses force, and, the visions lose meaning, the symbols become enigmatic, the entire book becomes a dilemma, and its apocalyptic events anachronistic.

## (2) The song of Moses and the Lamb—15:3-4.

1. *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints* 15:3. The song of Moses had long been incorporated in the temple services, which the temple worshippers sang in choruses. This visional victory song of the saints, as previously stated, was patterned after the Old Testament exodus song of Moses, led by Miriam; but here the phrase *and the Lamb* was added—*the song of Moses and the Lamb*.

The rhetoric of the song enhances the supreme excellence and glory of the object of its praise—the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb of God. The comparison of the irreverent familiarity of present times in addressing God, as if He were on equality with man is an inadvertent profanation. The eulogies of the song are sublime, as should be all prayer to God. The supreme title *Lord God Almighty*



expressed omnipotence; the tribute *great and marvellous* was exclamatory of matchless majesty; the attributes *just and true*, were the acknowledgment of submission to His righteous judgment; the coronation name, *thou King of saints*, included the saints of all ages, hence has been variously translated *thou King of the ages*; and it ascribed to Him eternal existence and the Sovereign of all saints, through whose power they were freed from the dominion of the imperial beast.

2. *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* 15:4. The interrogation, "Who shall not fear thee?" was expressive of complete and unalloyed adoration, short of the late irreverent familiarity. The refrain *thou only art holy* was the superlative holiness inherent only in God. The declaration *all nations shall come and worship before thee* was promissory of liberation from Roman image idolatry and the freedom of all men to worship God. The judicial declaration *for thy judgments are made manifest* had reference to the meeting out of retributive justice to the oppressors of the saints.

The song is a combination of many triumphant expressions of Old Testament psalmody of praise and adoration pertaining to Israel's deliverance from enemy nations and lord of dominion, and again represents a parallel of apocalypses of Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church.

(3) The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony—15:5-8.

1. *And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony was open*—15:5. The phrase "after these things" referred to the things that occurred after the vision of the exultant song of triumph. The first part of this chapter served to announce the scene which was continued and completed in chapter sixteen. It was after these preliminary visions of the seven angels that the procession forming the final events began.

The reference to *the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven* was in comparison with the measuring of the temple in chapter *eleven*. The picture here portrayed was that of the temple transferred from Jerusalem to heaven and transformed from temporal to spiritual. The vision is based on all that the temple on mount Zion meant to the nation of Israel. "Who are the Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:4-5). Thus the tabernacle stood for the most precious things in old covenant history. It was appropriate for the seven angels with the vials of plagues to be poured out on the harlot Jerusalem, ready for destruction, to come from the transformed temple in heaven.

2. *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—15:6.* The attire of the seven angels for the execution of the plagues of judgment was described, as "clothed in pure and white linen" and as having "golden girdles." This linen was not ordinary cloth, but was represented in another figure as "arrayed with precious stone, pure and bright"—they were garments with the composition of solid precious jewels. The golden girdle was like that of the son of man in chapter *one*. It is the symbolism of the glory and power of the Lord himself, and it signified the unlimited exercise of power to execute the will of the Lamb and the judgments of God.

3. *And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever—15:7.* The use of the article *the* before the four beasts indicated their identity with the creatures mentioned in chapter *five*. They should not be confused with the sea and land beasts, as applied to the persecutors. The word here has been properly translated creatures, or *beings*, as in chapter *five*, which called the signals for the horses and the riders in the visions of persecution. (See comments in chapter 5) The vision of this chapter was the last scene in

which *the four beings* appeared and it was an appropriate representation that these heavenly beings should act as the intermediaries between God and the seven angels of the vials in the role of this scene of plagues. They were special ministers of the Lamb to order the procession of events in imagery of the vials and the plagues.

4. *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—15:8.* The vision of the cloud-filled temple filled with the smoke from the glory of God, and from his power was the symbol of the invisible presence of God. As recorded in Ex. 40:34-35 none could enter the tabernacle during the manifestations of God's presence. So in this vision *no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled*—that is, until the order of events resulting in the destruction of the old Jerusalem and the old temple had been accomplished, after which the new Jerusalem, and the new temple would be open to all true worshipers; when *the tabernacle of God with men* would be accessible to all nations of men. But until this succession of events occurred the entrance of the temple was barred, and none could appear in intercession before God to avert the doom of destruction pronounced on Jerusalem, that once "faithful city turned harlot," and the fallen Babylon of apostasy.

## VII

### THE SEVEN VIALS OF WRATH

#### (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. 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. 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. 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."

The visions of chapter *sixteen* carry the scenes of the execution of the seven plagues, and the pouring out of the woes, in the recapitulation of the events enfolded in the seven seals and trumpets of the first series, which ended with chapter *eleven*. The symbols of the plagues of this chapter envisioned the same successive and progressive developments of the events surrounding the war against the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem; with additional visional scenes and intensified symbols of calamity and devastation; in the execution of the consuming judgment of God upon the beast, the false prophets, and the idolatrous worshipers of the imperial image.

The principle of the recapitulation of the first part of Revelation, from chapters *one* to *eleven* follows through this series. There was a consistent correspondence between the seals of the first series and vials of the second, but with the enlargement and intensification of the symbols of retributive judgment. An example of it was in the plague of sores—the subjects of the Roman beast received his *mark* by the worship of the imperial image, and God *marked* them in retribution with the noisome sores. The delineations of these penalties and punishments were concealed within visional folds, reserved for symbolic disclosure. The entire structure was metaphorical, which renders literalism impossible. A preliminary survey of the chapter is essential to bringing the signs and symbols of the chapter into its apocalyptic focus.

(1) A prologue to the plagues—16:1-14.

1. The voice of *verse one* is not that of an angel but of God himself. The seven angels were commanded to *Go your ways*—each had a special and separate work to perform, to *pour out the vials of wrath*. The vials corresponded with *the cup of his indignation* in chapter 14:10, the contents of which were the components of the penal woes which were

to descend on the subjects of God's wrath. It was during this period of divine wrath that *no man was able to enter into the temple* to appear in the presence of God for the prayer of intercession to avert the destruction of old Jerusalem and the devastation of the old temple.

2. The subjects of the plagues were the adherents of the Roman empire in Palestine; and the judgments which commenced with *verse two* were commensurate with the Roman beasts and the worshipers of his image who were the recipients of his *mark*.

3. The plagues followed the pattern of the experiences of the Israelites in Egypt, as indicated in *verses three through four*; and Pharoah Rameses, the oppressor of Israel, parallels Nero Caesar, the imperial persecutor of the church. It again presented the comparison of the old testament and new testament people of God—Israel and the Church.

4. Each apocalypse had a separate attending angel in the superintendence of the scene enacted, and each angel personified the vision he represented, as *verses five to six* exemplify, in the angels of waters of the sea, and of the altar of the martyrs; in each symbol the one represents the other.

5. The angel of the altar in *verse seven* reverted to the altar of martyrs in chapter 6:9-10 and was in the role of sending the judgment which the martyrs petitioned, and of satisfying their avenging cry.

6. The power of the persecution was represented as broken in *verse ten*, when the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the throne of the beast—the seat of authority for action in Palestine, which came from the emperor. The kingdom of the beast was *full of darkness* in Palestine. The same metaphor was used by Isaiah (chapter 13:10) to describe the fall of ancient Babylon; and Jesus adopted the same figure of speech (Matt. 24:29) in foretelling the darkness that settled over the Jewish state in the fall of Jerusalem. The same use of the symbol was made here in *verse ten*.

7. The realm of the persecutor's operations, by the wrath poured out of the vials, was subjected to the calamities narrated; and the minions of the emperor *gnawed their tongues for pain*—the symbol of retribution for the lies of deception and seduction their tongues had spoken; which was the method employed to brand the subjects of their deceit with the mark of emperor-worship. And in evidence of entire allegiance to the beast-power *verse eleven* declared that these representatives of Rome *blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds*.

8. In the history of Israel the armies invading their lands had come from the river Euphrates, and that historical fact was used in *verse twelve* as the symbol of Judea being over-run from that quarter. The drying of the river Euphrates *that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared* represented the removal of all barriers which hindered the progress of the powers to strike the final blow of the war against Judah and Jerusalem. It was related in symbolism to the feat of Cyrus in the military operation to divert the same river Euphrates for the capture of the old literal Babylon. This historical basis may be reasonably regarded as supplying the outline of this imagery.

9. The incidents of *verses thirteen and fourteen* are an apocalypse of the prevailing conditions before and during the siege of Jerusalem—the symbolic description of the pervading influence of seducers, deceivers, false prophets, and pseudo-signs, *insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*, as narrated in Matt. 24:11-24, and verified in the histories of Josephus and Pliny.

These demoniac spirits of seduction which were *like frogs* came out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. The frog has ever been a symbol of magical signs and that amphibious creature was here employed to signify the combined effort of the imperial minions to deceive and seduce the dwellers of Judea and Palestine.

It was this same demoniac spirit of *verse fourteen* that inspired *the kings of the earth* (the provincial kings of Palestine) *and of the whole world* (the imperial rulers) to

gather their armies for *the battle of that great day of God Almighty*. All the evidence necessary to sustain the claim that this day of God referred to the destruction of Jerusalem is the comparison with the prophecy of Zechariah (chapter 14) on the destruction of Jerusalem. The chapter begins with reference to *the day of the Lord*, and the entire chapter was a description of the siege and devastation of the city and the employment of high metaphors of peace and blessing that followed.

In further support of the parallel between Zech. 14:1 and Rev. 16:14, the analysis of the Zechariah chapter from the author's book, *GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD*, is here inserted:

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We shall not here read the chapter, but rather refer to its contents verse by verse. Zechariah 14 is almost universally used as "a second coming of Christ chapter" but it is a "destruction of Jerusalem chapter" instead.

Verse 1: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee."

The symbolic "day of the Lord" here is the same expression precisely that is used in Isaiah 13:9 in reference to the destruction of Babylon. If the destruction of Babylon could be called "the day of the Lord," why not the destruction of Jerusalem? That expression does not mean the second coming of Christ in either of these passages. Compare Isaiah 13 as a prophecy against Babylon, Isaiah 17 as a prophecy against Damascus, Isaiah 18 as a prophecy against Ethiopia, Isaiah 19 as a prophecy against Egypt, with Zechariah 14 as a prophecy against Jerusalem, and it can be seen that the assertions of the millennialists that Zechariah is prophesying the second coming of Christ and the millennium are wrong.

Verse 2: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."

The historical accounts of the siege of Jerusalem by



Josephus, Pliny, Horne and Clarke fulfill Zechariah's descriptions.

Reference to "nations gathered for battle" is a description of besieged Jerusalem, the houses rifled and the women ravished. The same description is found in Isaiah 13, verses 15 and 16, concerning the fall and destruction of Babylon. The comparison is forceful.

Verse 3: "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle."

Factually, all the nations were represented in the Roman army, and God afterward fought against them by means of the Northern nations. Read Zechariah 9:14-15: "And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones." The visitations are figurative, of course, but nevertheless significant of the fact that all the nations referred to "against" whom the Lord "fought" were destroyed.

Verse 4: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

The prophetic declaration that "his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem," does not refer to the second coming of Christ but rather to the siege of Jerusalem. Jesus Christ stood with his feet on the mount of Olives when he uttered the doom of the city. The Roman general stood on the mount of Olives when Jerusalem was besieged. The formations of the battle lines, entrenchments and redoubts, the circumvallations of the Romans, all enter into the graphic description and portrayal of the prophet that the mount should "cleave in the midst" and "toward the north" and "toward the south."

Verses 5-7: "And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto

Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

Obviously, these verses are a metaphorical description of the mixture of divine mercy with justice. After the visitation there would be light—the diffusion of divine knowledge. This did follow the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish state.

Verses 8-9: "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

The only consistent application of this language is a spiritual fulfillment in the gospel of Christ and the church. Who is ready to deny that the clause "in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one," refers to the present dispensation? There is one Lord, his name is one, and the Lord is "king over all the earth." It finds its fulfillment in the church of Christ where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all one in Christ, and one Lord over all.

Verses 16-17: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."

If these verses are not figurative, if they are to be taken literally, then all nations and families must literally go up to Jerusalem and literally offer animal sacrifices and keep the passover, restore Judaism with all of its literal ceremonies, in order to fulfill the prophecy. That would be a complete re-establishment of old Judaism and everything that characterized it, all of which was taken away. But if

these verses are not literal, then the application made of the whole chapter by the millennialists loses its force. These last verses refer to the expansion of the blessings of the gospel dispensation after the destruction of Jerusalem. Upon all who received the gospel, its blessings descended as rain; but to the unbelievers who rejected the gospel "upon them shall be no rain"—all such are barred from its promises and privileges.

The simple truth of the matter is that as Isaiah 13 is a prophecy on the destruction of Babylon, Zechariah 14 is a prophecy on the destruction of Jerusalem. It does not teach millennialism in "a sentence or a syllable."—*GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD*, pp. 246-9.

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Thus the downfall of Babylon in Isaiah 13, and of Jerusalem in Zechariah 14, Matthew 24, and in Revelation were described with identical symbolism. The evidence is preponderant that the gathering for the battle of *that great day of God* portended the over-running of Judea and the onslaught against Jerusalem by the Roman armies, set forth in numerous visional developments; which included the uprisings, insurrections and rebellions that diverted the powers of evil from the afflictions of the church.

## (2) A parenthesis of beatitudes—16:15.

Among the portents of persecution and catastrophe of the apocalypse, there are to be found declarations of consummate bliss and blessedness in a series of beatitudes. This cluster of precious and promising assurances to besieged, encompassed and beleaguered Christians shine through the text of Revelation with the brightest luster, like diamonds that flash and send forth a thousand rays as the sun falls upon them. These apocalyptic beatitudes, seven in number, are collated with comments in chapter 22:14. One of these scintillating assurances mingled with ominous overtones is in this verse: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

The warning words of *verse fifteen* are the interposition of another parenthetical beatitude comparable to chapter 1:3 and 14:13. A blessing is pronounced on all that *watch*, for God would come in these events *as a thief*. The phrase *as a thief* does not indicate the element of surprise, but rather of *preparedness*. Jesus gave the signs of these events in Matt. 24:25: "Behold, I have told you before"; and in Verse 33, "so likewise ye, when he shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." This same event must have been the object of Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians, first epistle, chapter 5:1-4, in reference to "the day of the Lord," saying that they were "not in darkness that that day should not overtake you as a thief"—that is, having knowledge of it, they would abide in preparation for the ominous events.

### (3) The gathering forces of Armageddon—16:16.

The outpouring of the seventh vial into the air, verses sixteen and seventeen symbolized the sphere of life and influence in contradistinction with the *earth* as the place of nations, and with the *heaven*, which denoted the ruling authorities.

In this context the great battle of Armageddon was envisioned: *And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon*. The name Armageddon was derived from mount *Megiddo*, which was located in a valley now known as the plain of Esdraelon. It was the battlefield of nations in Jewish history. It was in this valley of Megiddo that Deborah and Barak overthrew Sisera and annihilated the hosts of Midianite oppressors. (Judges 5:19) It was in "this valley of Jehoshaphat" where he triumphed over the ambushments of the combined armies of Ammon and Moab and "the fear of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel." (II Chron. 20:22-30) In this valley (designated in later history as the plain of Esdraelon) the Jews and the Saracens and the Egyptians, the Druses and the Turks and the warriors of many hostile nations, pitched their battles; and thus the

battlefield of mount Megiddo became a universal proverb. Under the word *Armageddon*, the original Bible Dictionary of Philip Schaff states that it was "a name used figuratively in Rev. 16:16, and suggested by the great battlefield noted in the Old Testament and now known as the Plain of Esdraelon." This figure in the text of the apocalypse was employed not for the physical location but for the battle imagery. The deepest affliction of Jerusalem could be symbolized in no stronger terms of mourning, as prophesied by Zechariah in chapter 12:11: "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon."

The personage designated *Gog* in connection with this battle imagery, was the king of a country that sustained relations of hostility to Israel. The names *Gog* and *Magog* were used identically and are associated in chapter 20:7-9 as a type of the enemies of Christ. It becomes evident that the symbolic adaptation of *Armageddon* rises above the physical slaughter that overwhelmed Jerusalem and Judah to the hostile forces of evil surrounding the church, personified as *Gog and Magog*. It was therefore symbolic of the battle against Christianity—the forces of Judaism on the one side and of heathenism on the other. But the Rider of the white horse was the Conqueror; the Son of man appearing on the white cloud was the Victor; the saints robed in white garments were the Overcomers; in all of the symbols and imagery of the visions and in surviving the persecutions, the church emerged in victory to make the kingdoms of this world (chapter 11:15) become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ by the universal sway of the gospel.

This is consistent with the repeated emphasis of the early chapters of the apocalypse in the letters addressed to the seven churches, that the period through which they were passing was the tribulation era of the church.

#### (4) The voice from the throne—16:17.

The great voice from the temple-throne that ordered the plagues, understood to be that of God Himself, now declared the end in *verse seventeen—it is done*—that is, the plagues

had been accomplished, the mission of the seven angels had been fulfilled.

The pouring out of the vial *into the air* symbolized that the sphere of the influence of the wicked nations was destroyed by the wrath of God in the seventh vial—it was the *destroying of them that destroy*; and is the same of apocalyptic characters as Isaiah 26:13-14, prophesying the decease of the wicked lords who had oppressed Israel: “O Lord our God, other lords have had dominion over us . . . they are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.” No clearer explanation could be made of the visions in Revelation in the pouring out of the vials of wrath upon the nations that persecuted the Bride of Christ, the Lamb—his church.

(5) The fall of Jerusalem and citadels of oppression—16:18-21.

The upheavals of *verse eighteen* in the visions of *voices, and thunders, and lightnings . . . and a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the face of the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great*, were the symbols of the fall of Jerusalem and the attending effects of the devastation of Judea, all of which resulted in the shaking of the nations of the empire itself; and though Jerusalem had fallen, the thunders and lightnings and earthquakes were not over until the persecuting nations received full measure of divine wrath from *the cup of his indignation*. History verifies the revolutionary reactions in governments symbolized by thunders and lightnings, culminating in wars between the nations of the empire in the coup d’ e tat of the conflict for power between the rulers, as in the wars of Nero Caesar. There is no need of leaving the ten epoch period of the persecutors signified in chapter 2:10 for the fulfillment of these symbols. As was true of the signs in Matt. 24:34, it was true of these symbols also: *This generation shall not pass till all these be fulfilled*.

As the prophecy of Zech. 14:4 foretold the city of Jerusalem as *cleft in the midst* before its fall, so *verse nineteen*

sees that *the great city was divided into three parts*. It envisioned the partitioning of the city by the circumvallations of the Roman armies, as in Zechariah 14; and as suggested in the comments by Adam Clarke on the Zechariah prophecy and verified by the history of Josephus.

The further statement that *the cities of the nations fell* signified the collapse of the citadels of oppression and the strongholds of evil influence in the operations of the beast and false prophet in their *lying wonders* and pseudo-signs of deception and seduction. The *great Babylon* that *came in remembrance before God* was the apostate Jerusalem, that *faithful city turned harlot* of Isaiah 1:21 designated in chapter 11:8 as the spiritual Sodom and Egypt *where also our Lord was crucified*. In the remembrance of her apostasies God gave *unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath* in divine retribution for her harlotry.

In the process of this unrelenting succession of inexorable judgments, *verse twenty* declared that *every island fled away, and the mountains were not found*—that is, all the seats of authority and power of the Jewish theocracy faded away and disappeared. The fall of Jerusalem and the demolition of the temple effected the complete abrogation of Judaism and the abolition of the Jewish state.

In the ultimate dispensation of judgment on the city and the land of the Jews and their state, *verse twenty-one* stated that *there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven . . . and men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail*.

This downpour of hail was preternatural—for *the plague thereof was exceeding great*—it was beyond normal evulsions from the elements; it was strange and inexplicable in its proportions. It signified *the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation*—described in the prolepsis of chapter 14:10. But the adherents of the satanic beast were not moved to repentance by any of these manifestations of divine judgment; rather, in complete allegiance to the evil powers they *blasphemed God* in steeped and stubborn resistance to His will.

## VIII

## THE SEVEN PLAGUES OF PENAL WOES

## (Chapter 16 Con't)

The introduction of an extensive excursus on the Destruction of Jerusalem, foretold in chapter fourteen of the prophecy of Zechariah, was the occasion for the interruption in the course of comments, and the reversed order of the verses in the dissertation of this chapter on the plagues and the woes, the symbolic imagery of which reverts to a continuation of chapter sixteen.

There was a very certain continuity in the imagery of the first and second series of visions in the striking analogy between the seven trumpets of the first part and the seven vials of the second part—showing the symbolism of the same period and events in a recapitulation with an enlargement and intensification of the signs. For an example there was the darkening of the sun in the symbolism of the first part, but of intensified heat in the same symbolism of the second part. Both series were apocalypses of the crises of two cities—Jerusalem and Rome—one in siege and destruction, the other in political government and imperial authority, but they covered the same period of events. The object of the apocalypse was not Rome, but the apostate and harlot Jerusalem. Rome was only collateral to the apocalyptic narrative as the power by which the symbolism was executed and accomplished. The affinity of events in the two series is apparent in the correspondence between the objects of the trumpets and the vials.

The first vial like the first trumpet produced an effect upon the earth; the second alike caused an effect on the sea; the third in each symbol made bloody the fountains and the rivers; the fourth of both changed the normal function of the sun; the fifth sign in each imagery operated on the seat of imperial power; the sixth in similarity dehydrated the Euphrates; and the seventh of both vial and trumpet transfused the air. All of these potent signs were descriptive of the order of events which removed the evil powers of Judaism and heathenism from the path of the



church and cleared the way for the expansion of the kingdom of God.

The significance of the seven plagues may now be summarized as follows:

(1) The noisome sore upon the adherents of the imperial beast: "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"—16:2.

The object of this plague was the people in Judea and other provinces of Palestine who had submitted to the imperial decree of the emperor of idolatry in the form of his image-worship, which was *the mark of the beast*. The effect of this plague was signified by a noxious malodorous sore, a stench in the nostrils, the symbol of the civic position of idolatry; and it was *grievous* as a spiritual contagion, being inimical to the ultimate degree to Christianity. In this role the emperor was the veritable embodiment of the *antichrist* of I John 2:18 and I John 4:3 and II John 7. The mention of "the last time" by John in this connection was comparable to Paul's "present distress" I Cor. 7, and similar allusions in other epistles in the same sort of reference to the grievous times connected with the end of Jerusalem and of the Jewish state.

(2) The sea of dead blood which putrified the society of imperial idolatry: "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."—16:3.

In accordance with the definitions of the symbols in the first section, the *sea* represented society in various descriptions—tossed and troubled, or placid and peaceful. Here *the sea became as the blood of a dead man*—signifying the complete dissolution of the emperor-beast and his subject.

(3) The conversion of the rivers and fountains of waters into blood: "And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood"—16:4.

The pollution of the fountains and streams of water resulted in epidemics of deadly disease. The sickening figure of the total contamination of the streams of water by the effluence of blood was symbolic of retribution for the blood of the martyrs. In chapter 6:10 the souls under the altar of martyrdom cried: *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* This plague symbol was the answer to the martyr-cry. It was the squaring of the account in this symbolic retribution of blood, the avenging of the martyrs. And verse six so declares: *For they have shed the blood of the saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.* The statement "for they are worthy" means that they deserved the recompense of blood for the blood they had shed.

A similar pronouncement of judgment upon apostate Jerusalem was made by Jesus in Matt. 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The plague meant that they were figuratively made to drink the blood which they had made to flow from the mass murder of the saints.

(4) The smitten sun that scorched blasphemous men with fire: "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire"—16:8.

This plague was the symbol of the punishment inflicted on the persecutors who had blasphemed God in the assumption of the powers and prerogatives of God by compelling the worship of the emperor's image; and had thus branded the mark in the hands and on the foreheads of all who bowed in submission. This symbol portended the end of the activities of the emperor and his colleagues.

(5) The vial of wrath poured upon the seat of the beast that darkened his kingdom: "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was

full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain"—16:10.

The king of the kingdom mentioned in this verse must be identified with *the great red dragon* of chapter 12:9, personified as *the devil and Satan*.

The *seat of the beast* here was on the same principle of *Satan's seat*, or throne, in Pergamos; mentioned in chapter 2:13. It referred to his base of operations through his imperial agents. His kingdom was darkened by the exposure of the deceptions of his *lying wonders*, which resulted in his ignominious end. The subjects of this Satanic beast, who *repented not of their* deeds of idolatrous worship of the emperor-image, by which they *blasphemed the God of heaven*, suffered the same consequences.

(6) The smiting of the Euphrates which evaporated its waters: "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared"—16:12.

It has been noted that the symbol of this verse was based on the history of Israel's enemies invading Judea from beyond the Euphrates in their western aggressions. The drying of the river by the pouring of the sixth vial symbolizes obliterating all deterrents to the hordes overrunning Judea and besieging Jerusalem. An allusion to the Israelites crossing over the emptied bed of the Jordan was not outside the imagery, in which application judgment was executed on the nation there victorious but here apostate.

The verses that follow from *thirteen* to *sixteen* describe the gathering armies for the final battle in the overthrow of Jerusalem, with the spiritual overtones of the conflict between the forces of Judaism and heathenism on one side, and Christianity (the church) on the other. Previous comments in verse 16 of this chapter on *Armageddon* make further discussion here unnecessary.

It is sufficient to add that the sixth plague was descriptive of the battle which destroyed this symbolic Babylon—the apostate harlot Jerusalem, *causing great mourning* for Jerusalem among the Jewish tribes everywhere.

(7) The last vial poured into the air, causing voices, thunders, lightnings and a great earthquake: "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. 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"—16:17-18.

As defined before, the symbol of the air represented the sphere of life and influence of the wicked nations. In Eph. 2:1 Satan was named the *prince of the power of the air*—not the actual exercise of power, but of influence—the *spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*.

In this symbol *the great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne* was not the voice of an angel, but of the Great God Himself. The great voice said: *It is done*. The time for the end of the judgments had come; the time for fall of the Harlot City; and the time for the punishments to follow on both Jewish and imperial persecutors of the church; all of which was signified by the distant rumbling of *voices, thunders and lightnings*. The *earthquake* everywhere used in the apocalypse symbolized *the shaking of nations*; and the effects of the fall of Jerusalem were not limited to Judea and the Jews—the mighty influence of the terrible events had a solemn impact of worldwide significance. With the removal of Judaism from the path of the church the way was opened for the universal expansion of Christianity, and the Lord's words in Matt. 24:31 were fulfilled: "And he shall send his angels (emissaries) with a great sound of a trumpet (the proclamation of the gospel), and they shall gather together his elect (those converted by the gospel) from the four winds (every direction), from one end of heaven to the other (the remotest bounds of the habitation of men). And it was done.

The statement of *verse nineteen* that Jerusalem was divided into three parts, had a further significance than the partitioning of the city by the Romans as described by Zech. 14. The apparent application of the symbol was to the three sources of Jerusalem's afflictions: *pestilence, sword*

and *exile*. The prophecy of Ezekiel on the siege and destruction of Jerusalem described these three parts in the following words: "Thou shalt burn with fire (pestilence) a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part and smite about it with a knife (sword): and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind (exile); and I will draw out a sword after them." There could be no closer relation between the fulfillment of a prophecy and an apocalypse than Ezekiel 5:2 and Revelation 16:19. Again the Old Testament and the New Testament furnish accumulative evidence that the symbols of Revelation were fulfilled in the lives and experiences of the people to whom the apocalypse was addressed.

## IX

### THE ROMAN WAR AGAINST JERUSALEM AS FORETOLD BY JESUS CHRIST

(Matthew 24)

The parallels and comparisons between the *signs* of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew and the symbols of Revelation have been repeatedly mentioned. In order to support this parallel a full discussion of Matthew 24 is here inserted from *GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD*:

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The idea that "signs of the times" portend the coming of the Lord and the end of all things is based on a misinterpretation of the 24th chapter of Matthew.

(1) The two questions answered.

Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, are parallel chapters. Jesus was in the city of Jerusalem with the disciples, viewing the temple. The disciples, like all of the Jews, admired the temple buildings. Looking upon the massive stones of the mighty structure of Solomon's temple, Jesus amazed the disciples with the declaration: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."

The disciples naturally thought that when such a stupendous thing as that happened, it would be the end of the world—the end of all things. So the two questions: “When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming?” Answering the question—“What shall be the sign of thy coming?” Jesus told them plainly there would be none. “Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” There would be no signs of his coming. No man knows the time of his coming; the angels do not know; and Mark 13:32 adds “neither the Son”—the Lord in his state of humanity had not been shown the things of the future that belonged only to the Father. The Son’s enlightenment and illumination on all things were subject to the time that it was the Father’s will to show him—John 5:19-20; but “no man” could ever by any “signs of the times” know the time of the Lord’s coming. In proof of this I need only to call your attention to the expression: “So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” So shall “be” the coming—it will be that way when he comes. No man will know until he comes. Yet, men in their audacity have the gigantic gall and colossal cheek, in the face of a statement like that, to say that they do know.

The answer of Jesus disillusioned the disciples regarding signs of his coming and pointed to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age.

## (2) The fall of Jerusalem.

In his answer to the question, “When shall these things be?” Jesus mentioned the signs of the impending siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the city, the demolition of the temple and the end of the Jewish state. When he answered the question as to the time of his coming he said that “no man knows”—there would be no signs. When he answered the question on the destruction of Jerusalem, he mentioned and described in detail the signs.

The indication that the siege of Jerusalem is the subject of the Matthew 24 discourse is to be seen in the application of the numerous expressions peculiar to prophecies and apocalypses of the Old Testament concerning the destruction and desolation of ancient cities and nations, which are used

throughout this chapter, and the parallel chapters of Mark and Luke.

1. The abomination of desolation mentioned in verse 15, taken from the prophecy of Daniel, was said by the Lord to be fulfilled when the Jews should see the presence of the signs and symbols of the Romans "standing in the holy place," as stated by Mark. This is the Lord's own interpretation and explanation both of the prophecy of Daniel and the fulfillment in Matthew 24.

2. The exhortation to flee to the mountains with haste, with no opportunity or means to arrange for the carriage and transport of personal belongings and supplies, when they beheld the Roman armies in full march, indicates the beginning of the siege.

3. The distress and tribulation that would accompany the prolonged and bitter siege, confirmed by eye witness historians such as Josephus and Pliny in appalling descriptive detail, can be given no other application.

4. The reference to pseudochrists and imposters, pretenders claiming to be the Christ, with deceptive signs such as the magical wonders of Simon Magi, shows that the effort to imitate the Messiah was widespread, thus identifying the time with the works of Jesus belonging to that age and generation.

5. The mention in Luke's narrative of the distress upon the land of Judea, the mass massacre of the inhabitants by the sword, the carrying away of the captives into all the surrounding nations, the encompassing of the city by foreign armies, and the trodding down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles permanently—all of these things can be descriptive of only one event of history: that final crisis of the ages concerning Jerusalem, in which transition from the dispensation of Judaism to the age of Christianity became published through all the world. The complete and final overthrow of the Jewish capital and temple, representing the cult of Judaism, and the consequent expansion of the new kingdom of Christ, are seen in these evidences to be the main subject of Matthew 24—the conquest and establishment of Christianity in all the world.

6. The climax of all the statements of the whole chapter, to settle the question of time, is in the declaration that all the things indicated by the signs would have fulfillment in that generation. The narrative of Luke adds to the strength of Matthew's statements: "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled"—Luke 21:28-31. Matthew's account reads, "till all these things be fulfilled." Notice the expression: when YE see, know YE, and, I say unto YOU, statements which identify the people of that generation with the fulfillment of the events depicted.

A significant statement is made by Luke in verse 31. He says, "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Mark's account adds, "even at the doors"—Mark 13:29. The obvious meaning is: that in the midst of these ominous developments the believing disciples need not be frantic because the kingdom was with them, *nigh at hand*, and *even at the doors*; and the Lord was as near to them as the kingdom which hovered over and surrounded them with all the divine assurances of the Lord's own presence. The truth of this is further seen in verse 28: "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." It is here evident that *redemption* meant their *deliverance* from the siege, and it is given the same application in this context with the phrase "the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." In this connection the two expressions have the same significance. The kingdom was *nigh at hand* in the same sense that redemption or deliverance was *even at the doors*.

The teaching of both the old and new testaments concerning the kingdom of Christ is: that it contemplates the full length of time from his ascension to heaven after his resurrection to his descension from heaven at the end. "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet"—I Corinthians 15:25. The overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple was the final sign to the world that he was seated "on the right hand of power," as he had declared in Mat-



threw 26:64 to the high priest of the Jews; and as further announced to this Jewish official that he and his fellow officials of the Sanhedrin should thereafter *see* it. Methinks they did—at the destruction of their capital city and their national temple.

(3) The end of the Jewish state.

1. “After the tribulations of these days.” The millennialists teach that “the tribulation” will be at the time of the rapture. The saints, they say, will be caught up in the rapture, and while the saints are in the rapture, “somewhere in the heavens,” the tribulation period will be in process on earth; but the saved will be spared the tribulation, for the saints will be up in the heavens somewhere with Jesus in rapture until the tribulation period is over, when with the Lord, they say, will return to earth for the millennium. But Matthew 24 does not fit the picture. The record says that the disciples were told to flee to the mountains when this tribulation begins. According to the millennial theory there would be no disciples on earth to flee—they would all be up in the rapture!

2. “Pray that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the sabbath.” The law would be nailed to the cross, the sabbath abolished; Christians would not be observing it, but the Jewish authorities would be enforcing it. Why pray that the flight be not on the sabbath? Simply because the gates of the city would be closed, and the enforced restrictions of the sabbath would hinder their flight. The reference to winter—“pray that your flight be not in the winter”—shows that Jesus was referring to hindrances to flight. The Jewish state did not end until the destruction of Jerusalem. Hence, the Jews maintained their state and enforced the law. That fact furnished the ground for the Lord’s warnings on hindrances to their flight. He surely did not mean that “winter” was a holy season or that the sabbath is a holy day, which could not be violated even in an emergency of life or death. Women “with child,” or nursing babes, would be subject to delay, temporal privations, and increased trouble and hardship, besides the difficulty of providing for actual needs of subsistence itself.

In the winter their infants and children might perish with cold and hunger.

3. "The day of visitation." That expression also has to do with the things that occurred in connection with the destruction Jerusalem. "The things which ye behold," is the key to it all. Mark and Luke must be regarded as faithful reporters, along with Matthew, and the application of the language, therefore, must be in harmony with all three records. A comparison of the three reports clearly places the events in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state. The two questions, as recorded by Matthew, read: "when shall these things be? and what are the signs of thy coming and of the end of the world?" Mark's record says: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" Then Luke's record reads: "Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" The answers of Jesus to these questions were the augurs of total destruction to the ears of men who had been taught that their temple and city would abide forever.

Many of the figures of speech used in Matthew 24, in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem were used in Isaiah 13, in referring to the destruction of Babylon. Note Isaiah 13:10: "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." Similar language is used in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, similar symbolic language was used. When it says that "the sun shall be darkened" and "the moon shall not give her light" and "the stars shall fall from heaven," people are wont to believe these expressions denote the second coming of Christ; but the same figures of speech were used in the Old Testament description of the destruction of Babylon, when Isaiah said of that event that the sun should be darkened and the moon should not give light. The reference is to the darkness that would settle over the Babylonian state in Isaiah 13, and the Jewish nation and the city of Jerusalem in Matthew 24. The language cannot be taken literally in either case, but

as representing the end of the Babylonian nation and of the Jewish state. Thus Jesus disillusioned the disciples on both of their questions, showing them that he was prophesying the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state, rather than of the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. When Matthew 24 is taken from millennialists, the argument for the imminent return of Christ based on *signs of the times* is destroyed.

(4) The signs—verse by verse.

1. False teachers—verse 5. “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” Jesus simply warned the disciples that false teachers would be numerous, more than ever before. Josephus, the historian, verifies the fact that near the time of Jerusalem’s fall, many false Messiahs appeared, claiming to be the Christ. He says these became more numerous before the siege of Titus. Luke, the historian, records such pseudo-signs and false wonders as the magical deceptions of Simon Magus—Acts 8—which were employed on an accentuated scale before the destruction of Jerusalem by the professional deceivers mentioned in the Lord’s predictions.

2. Wars and rumors of wars—verse 6: “And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars.” Many smaller nations were at war with the Romans at that time, enemies at war with each other and rumors of war in abundance on every hand, and from every quarter as the destruction of Jerusalem drew near. Josephus verifies the fact that from every part of the empire wars followed in succession, and in waves of revolt, like the swells of the ocean, to the final dissolution of the empire.

3. Famine and pestilence—verse 7: “For nations shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” In the days of Claudius Caesar, before the destruction of Jerusalem, there was an unparalleled famine—the greatest famine the world ever knew occurred. The record of Matthew 24 is corroborated by the Spirit in Agabus, the prophet, as reported by Luke in Acts 11:28:

“And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.” Again Josephus testified that the famine actually occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the fulfillment is a matter of historical record.

4. Earthquakes—verse 8: “All these are the beginning of sorrows.” That great earthquakes occurred during the reign of Nero is a historical fact, and the testimony of Jesus is added to that of Josephus of an unusual number of earthquakes occurring in various countries, before the destruction of Jerusalem. Many cities of Asia Minor were destroyed by earthquakes.

5. Delivered to death—verse 9: “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.” Paul, Peter, and James, and James the Less were all put to death before the destruction of Jerusalem.

6. Apostasies—verse 10: “And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” This is the Lord’s warning of many apostasies, when the faith of the disciples would fail, as under pressure of persecution many should become offended. Such apostasies were everywhere in evidence prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, the evidence of which are not only mentioned in the sacred text, but in parallel secular history. The most valuable of such historical evidence is the testimony of Josephus, who was an eye-witness to the destruction of Jerusalem.

7. The gospel to all of the world—verse 14: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come.” Within this period of gospel history the sound of the messengers’ feet had been heard all over the Roman world—Romans 10:15—and the gospel was, in fact, preached to the whole creation before the destruction of Jerusalem. Read Colossians 1:23: “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every

creature which is under heaven; for which I Paul am made a minister." Hence, before the death of Paul this "sign" was actually fulfilled—literally enough, indeed, to satisfy a most exacting literalist. Eusebius says "the gospel was like the sun, enlightening the world at once." It was universally published; the Gentile nations were illuminated with Christianity, providing the events to correspond with the prophecies, a fact so striking as to be convincing without disputation.

8. The end of the Jewish world—verse 14: "Then shall the end come." Here, at once, with one accord, the millennialist jumps to the conclusion that this "end" means the end of the world—"then shall the end come"—but the end of what? The end of Jerusalem; the destruction of the temple and the end of the Jewish state and the end of Judaism.

9. The abomination of desolation—verse 15: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (who so readeth, let him understand:)" This description refers to the heathen symbols and the Roman standards raised in the temple. Every orthodox Jew looked upon the temple as sacred and holy. When the Romans conquered the city, and entered it, the Roman soldiers marched into the temple, hauled down the ornaments and images of the temple, and raised instead the symbols and standards of paganism and Romanism. That is what was called the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. The "abomination of desolation" was fulfilled when those Roman standards and pagan symbols were seen in the holy place "where they ought not to be."

10. The disciples flee—verses 16:18: "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." The destruction of Jerusalem was regarded by all pious Jews as pestilence and desolation and was taken as a sign that the time for them to escape had come—to do what Jesus had warned them to do—to flee to

the mountains. The disciples did as Jesus said—they heeded the warnings and fled. From the flat roofs of their houses in the city or from their fields in the country, they saw the Roman army in full march, there was no time to go inside for goods or raiment. Life was more than personal property. When they saw the sign of the standards and symbols of the Romans in the temple, they remembered that Jesus had warned them of that very thing, and at the news of the Roman approach they fled to Pella, the northern boundary of Perea.

It is a remarkable but historical fact that Cestius Gallius, the Roman general, for some unknown reason, retired when they first marched against the city, suspended the siege, ceased the attack and withdrew his armies for an interval of time after the Romans had occupied the temple, thus giving every believing Jew the opportunity to obey the Lord's instruction to flee the city. Josephus the eyewitness, himself an unbeliever, chronicles this fact, and admitted his inability to account for the cessation of the fighting at the time, after a siege had begun. Can we account for it? We can. The Lord was fighting against Jerusalem—Zechariah 14:2: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." The Lord was besieging that city. God was bringing these things to pass against the Jewish state and nation. Therefore, the opportunity was offered for the disciples to escape the siege, as Jesus had forewarned, and the disciples took it. So said Daniel; so said Jesus; so said Luke; so said Josephus.

And so it was—it was left for Titus, the Roman general, to execute the siege, after the faithful disciples had fled. Verses 19-22: "And woe unto them that are with child, and them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days

shall be shortened." These verses deal with the hindrances to flight from the besieged city, the tribulation of the siege, and the lifting of the siege for the escape of the disciples.

11. Pseudo-signs—verses 23-26: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Here was the Lord's warning against deceivers, fake prophets, false alarms and fraudulent signs—the forewarnings to enable the disciples to discriminate between the spurious and the genuine. "Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." These warnings observed by the disciples of the Lord enabled them to escape the traps incident to the approaching siege.

12. The eagles and the carcass—verses 27-28: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

"The *coming*" here refers to the approach of the Roman armies. The Jewish nation was the *carcass* which the Roman *eagles* were sent to devour.

These verses describe the swiftness of the events and the suddenness of all the occurrences connected with the land of Judea.

13. After the tribulation—verse 29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." After the tribulation of these days—that is, after the things that occurred during the siege. The siege began August 10, A. D. 70, six hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar's siege and destruction of the first temple. All of the houses and underground chambers were filled with putrified corpses. One million one hundred thousand people perished, and the remnants were scattered. Think of it—in only two months with only two armies

fighting in the limited areas around Jerusalem, one million one hundred thousand people perished. Every building was filled with perishing bodies; famished people ate the putrefied flesh of human carcasses; mothers ate the flesh of their own babies. And outside the besieged city the families of the expatriated race of Jews in many places throughout the empire were slaughtered. Josephus, the historian, verifies the fact that there was never anything like it before or since, nor ever shall be.

The signs in the heavens, the darkening sun and falling stars, refer to the falling of Jewish dignitaries, casting down of authorities and powers, long established, and signified the darkness that settled upon the Jewish state.

The sun of the Hebrew temple was darkened, the moon of the Jewish commonwealth was as blood, the stars of the Sanhedrin fell from their high seats of authority. Isaiah and Joel describe the ruin of both ancient Babylon and Jerusalem in similar description, in Isaiah 13 and Joel 2.

14. The coming of the Son of man—verse 30: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.”

The sign of the Son of man in the heaven was a signal, the evidence of divine visitation and intervention in the downfall of the Jewish authorities and in all the transpiring events. The mourning of all the tribes of the earth refers to the lamentation of the Jewish families all over the world because of the destruction of their city and their temple and their state. The coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven is not a reference to the second coming of Christ but to the coming foretold by Jesus to Caiaphas in Matthew 26:64: “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Jesus told Caiaphas that he would see it, he would be a living witness to these events. The reference to the Son of man coming “with power and great glory” and “sitting on the right hand of power” is emphasis on the magnitude of the things that occurred. The Son of man came in power in the transpiring events.



15. Sending forth his angels—verse 31: “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Here is the grand announcement of the world-wide success of the gospel, the universal expansion of Christianity after the destruction of Jerusalem. The angels of this verse were messengers, emissaries of the gospel. The gathering of the elect from the four winds meant that these messengers would carry the gospel to every nook and corner of the inhabited world. This is the history of what occurred. With the downfall of Judaism the greatest foe of the church was removed, the path cleared of the chief obstacle, resulting in the universal sweep of Christianity. The knowledge of God covered the earth as waters cover the sea.

16. The signs that it was near—verses 32-33: “When the branch is yet tender . . . ye know that summer is nigh . . . so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” The signs of the approaching events would serve as portents to all faithful disciples that the things of which they were being warned would be near. The disciples would recognize these signs up to the time of the siege, and would know that it was “near, even at the doors.” It is here that Luke’s account says: “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh”—Luke 21:28. The providential means for the escape of the faithful was divinely prearranged and when they should see these things “begin to come to pass” they were told to “look up” and “lift up” their heads in full confidence that their redemption, their deliverance, was at hand. This redemption extended beyond the mere escape from the siege—it was a greater deliverance from the persecutions of the Jewish authorities and the oppositions of Judaism, brought to an end by the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish state.

To say that the expression “it is near” refers to the end of the world, the end of time, or a “rapture” theory is contrary to the context of Matthew 24. When these signs appeared the Lord said, “Let them which are in Judea flee”—

and they did. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh"—and they did know it. If it meant the end of the world, why say "let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains"? And why say, "let not them that are in the country enter thereinto"—into Jerusalem? These sayings show clearly that the whole thing is a description of the destruction of Jerusalem. Reverting in verses 41 and 42 to these surroundings the Lord said that where two would be "in the field," or "grinding at the mill"—one would be taken and the other left—that is, the believing disciple would recognize the signs and take flight, while the unbelieving companion would remain and perish in the siege.

The statement that all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, as has been previously explained, is a reference to the Jewish families scattered all over the Roman empire—they would mourn the downfall of Jerusalem and the end of their Jewish commonwealth.

17. All these things fulfilled—verse 34: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." In Luke 21:31-32, the Lord said: when YE see, and know YE, and, I say unto YOU—so here is the Lord's own statement of the period to which "these things" belonged and during which they would all be fulfilled. All of the "signs" mentioned in Matthew 24 are mentioned above verse 24. After having mentioned these signs, Jesus then said, "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Notice—"all these things"—not some of them—all of them would be fulfilled before that generation passed. But we are told that "this generation" meant that race—meaning only that the race of the Jews would not pass till all this was fulfilled. The Lord would not be guilty of such a truism—telling the Jews what would happen to their race, and then saying that the race will not pass away until everything that will happen to the race happens to it! A truism would not be the word for that. It is sheer nonsense to have Christ say that certain things would happen to the Jewish race, but the Jewish race would not pass away until what would happen to the Jewish race happened to

it! No, Jesus said “this generation”—the generation living then—would not pass “till all these things be fulfilled.” The Lord’s use of the same language after pronouncing the woes on the Pharisees in the previous chapter of Matthew shows clearly the reference was to their own time. There are nine woes pronounced upon these Jewish officials in Matthew 23, which are followed by verse 36: “Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.” Immediately following this statement is the pronouncement on Jerusalem in verse 37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” and the verdict of verse 38, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” There is but one conclusion, and it is clear—all the woes of Matthew 23 and all the signs of Matthew 24 referred to that generation of time and span of life, and were all fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, and immediately thereafter.

18. Words shall not pass away—verse 35. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

The vouchsafement of the word of Christ is the surety of the fulfillment of “all these things” in the period that he designated as “this generation.” His words are the seal. And upon the integrity of his word another stupendous fact is predicted: that is, heaven and earth shall pass away. The “shall” and “shall not” are equally significant: his word concerning the signs and events is as sure as the fact that heaven and earth *shall* pass away. And it is here that the transition in the subject of the context of Matthew 24 takes place, from the destruction of Jerusalem to the second advent of Christ.

19. The coming of the Son of man—verses 36-51. “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not

until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good-man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The expression "that day and hour" in verse 36 connects with the pronouncement "heaven and earth shall pass away" in verse 36—that day and hour being when heaven and earth shall pass away, and is therefore related to the coming of the Son of man. In II Peter 3:10 it is declared that "the day of the Lord shall come . . . in the which the heavens shall pass away . . . the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Thus the passing away of heaven and earth, mentioned in verse 35 of Matthew 24, shall be an event accompanying "the coming of the Son of man" in verses 36 and 37, and with these verses the Lord's discourse turns from the destruction of Jerusalem to the second coming of Christ. It is of *that day and hour*, respecting the time, that neither men nor angels know, and of which there shall be no impending signs to portend its imminence. It is not a subject for revelation, it belongs to the Father alone, excluding the Son while he was on the earth in the flesh of his incarnation; in the state of

humanity. It is on this point that Mark introduces the phrase "neither the Son" which Matthew omits. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."—Mark 13:32. The statement of John 5:20 that the Father "showeth him all the things that himself doeth" evidently did not apply to the time of his fleshly humiliation; for it is positively stated by Mark that the time of the coming of the Son of man was not known by the Son himself. "Neither the Son, but the Father." But having now returned to the Godhead, no longer clothed with humanity, God has shown to the Son all the things that he will do. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."—Colossians 2:9. The fact stands that *of that day and hour* no man knows now, and no man shall ever know beforehand—for "so shall the coming of the Son of man be." It shall so be when he comes.

Meanwhile in verses 37 to 39 the Lord says that the course of human society shall be as it was "in the days of Noah" before the first destruction of the world by the deluge. "They knew not until the flood came." In II Peter 3:3-10 the apostle compares this past universal flood with the future universal conflagration, when the world "reserved for fire against the day of judgment" shall be brought to the end. Here is the passage:

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-

suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

The comparison of this passage with Matthew 24, verses 36 to 39, shows that the references are to the second coming of Christ and the judgment, at the end of time. The point of emphasis established is this one thing: *of that day and hour* no man knows, and there shall be no portents as that phraseological anachronism "the signs of the times," so prevalent in religious parlance, would mean.

## 20. One shall be taken and the other left—verses 40-51.

In reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, the disciple of Jesus who believed his warnings, recognized the signs and fled to the mountains, as the Lord has admonished; while the unbelieving Jew beside him remained to perish in the siege. The same is true of the Lord's coming. Though there will be no signs to usher his return, for "ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," and "in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." But when he *descends* to take the living righteous, they shall *ascend* to meet him, while the living wicked shall remain to perish in judgment with the wicked dead. Pertinent to this point are Paul's comforting words to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, verse 15-18:

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The apostle here states that the righteous who shall be

alive at the coming of the Lord shall not “prevent”—precede—the righteous dead in the ascension to meet him; but the dead in Christ shall rise first—that is, before the living in Christ are caught up; and together the ascending saints shall meet the descending Saviour; and “so shall ever be with the Lord.” As for the resurrection and judgment of the wicked, other passages teach that the wicked will be raised and judged at the same last day upon which the righteous will ascend to meet the Lord—the difference exists not in the *time* of the resurrection but in the retribution and the reward.

The parable of the faithful and wise servant, in verses 43-51, contrasted with the evil servant, provides the example for the practical application of the Lord’s teaching in reference to his future coming. He would make the wise and faithful servant “ruler over all his goods”; but the evil servant he would “cut asunder”—a reference to the method of punishment among the orientals, the Greeks and the Romans, a form of which was referred to by Jesus in Luke 13:1. The reference to the faithful servant being made “ruler over all his goods” is not a rulership in a millennium, which some of that persuasion have interpreted it to mean; for the unfaithful shall at the same time be cut off and consigned to the infernal region of “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Consequently, there would be none over whom the faithful could rule—unless millennialists are willing to yield to the inconsistent consequence that weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth will be a prevailing condition during the millennium! That would be a freak millennium to anticipate. The parable is, of course, only illustrative of the opposites in retribution and reward; and of the fact that at the judgment of the last day God will cut off the unfaithful and appoint their portion to the realm of “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” a phrase that is suggestive of the utter despair which is beyond the power of all language to describe and deplore.

It is incumbent upon us all, and immediately imperative, that we heed the Master’s behests, as did the disciples who took warning and fled the siege, that we may be “that

servant, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

As for the signs of Matthew 24, the generation that despised the Christ beheld with their own eyes these events of judgment. It was only thirty-seven years from the crucifixion of Christ to the coming of the Roman armies to initiate the events in which all these things were completely effected.—*GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD*, pp. 233-260.

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## X

### THE HARLOT WOMAN ON THE SCARLET BEAST (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. 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*. 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 heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 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. 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. 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. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

The contents of this chapter comprised the announcement of the angel to reveal to John the judgment to have been passed upon the harlot city.

Before performing the announcement, however, the angel carried John away into a wilderness for a visional description of this harlot. These remaining chapters of the apocalypse surrounded only two opposite figures—the old apostate Jerusalem in contrast with the New Jerusalem, the Victorious Church of Christ.

The old Judaistic Jerusalem with all of her apostasies must have been removed in order for the New Jerusalem, the church—or kingdom of Christ—to have come into world-wide sway. Hence, symbolic Babylon the Harlot and figurative New Jerusalem, the Bride (the church), were the center of the remaining apocalypses. Later, John was

transported in vision to a mountain where he was allowed to view the Bride, the wife of the Lamb (the church of Christ)—but before doing so, the first angel summoned the Seer in spirit to appropriate surroundings to reveal the identity and character of *Babylon, the great, the mother of the harlots, and abominations of the earth*, and to visualize the judgment that was to come upon her—for the destruction of the Harlot must precede the victory of the Bride.

The *seventeenth* and *eighteenth* chapters must be considered as one—for the announced judgment upon the Harlot by the angel at the beginning of chapter *seventeen* was suspended by the vision of the Harlot; and another angel descended in chapter *eighteen* to explain the *mystery of Babylon the great*, and to reveal the judgment against her in the overthrow and destruction of the city which the Harlot represented.

There are numerous reasons why the Harlot could not have been the city of Rome. It is stated in this chapter that the beast hated the Harlot. But the beast admittedly was the Roman Empire, and if Rome was the Harlot, the Roman Empire hated the city of Rome. The beast being the empire, the Harlot was of necessity some other than Rome.

First: The hatred of the beast for the Harlot harmonized with the animosity of both the Roman Empire and of Rome, its capitol city, toward Jerusalem.

Second: The latter half of Revelation beginning with chapter *twelve* was recapitulatory of the first half ending with chapter *eleven*, under another and different set of symbols. In chapter 11:8 the names Sodom and Egypt were symbolically applied to apostate Jerusalem, and thus identified by the descriptive clause *where also our Lord was crucified*. It was because of these apostasies and abominations that the symbolic name Babylon in chapter 14:8 was applied to the fallen city of Jerusalem.

Third: There was no basis for a symbol or an analogy in which Rome could have been depicted as having become a harlot, for Rome never stood in the spiritual relation to God as a faithful city, turned to harlotry. The Harlot was a city once faithful to God, and only Jerusalem can fulfill the symbolic descriptions.

Fourth: The apocalypse was not directly concerned with Rome, or the Roman Empire; rather, they were envisioned only as the instrument in the execution of judgment on Jerusalem, which in her multiplied apostasies had come to be symbolized as *the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*, i. e. Judea and Palestine.

All of this was in direct fulfillment of the things Jesus foretold in the *twenty-third* and *twenty-fourth* chapters of Matthew and the *twenty-first* chapter of Luke concerning the apostasies and abominations which would bring doom to the city of Jerusalem.

For example read Matt. 23:34-37: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The words of Stephen in denunciation of Jerusalem's abominations in Acts 7:52-53 were predictive of this doom: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

The culmination of the Lord's upbraidings and Stephen's denunciation of Jerusalem were reached in John's visions of Jerusalem as Sodom, Egypt and Babylon, with her abominations and harlotry. There are other such portents of the downfall and doom of Jerusalem in the discourses of Christ and in the apostolic epistles, all of which come within the scope of John's visions.

In chapter *seventeen* two chief figures were introduced: First, the old Jerusalem as the Harlot; and the persecuting

power of Rome as the beast upon which the Harlot sat. Corollary to these two symbolic characters were the two judgments, one against the woman, the other against the beast in the form of the announced destruction of both. However, as the beast symbolized the Roman Empire, it was only as the persecuting instrument; hence, the destruction of the beast which should be accomplished was not the empire itself but the persecuting power which the beast embodied and personified.

Seeing that chapters *seventeen* and *eighteen* deal with Jerusalem as the Harlot, and the persecuting power of the beast as the Roman Empire, the verses of the two chapters fall into an orderly sequence.

(1) The harlot sitting upon the waters—17:1-2.

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.” The term *harlot* has been used always in a figurative sense to denote wicked cities, as of Nineveh in Nahum 3:4; and of Jerusalem in Isa. 1:21; and of Israel, when the nation became a harlot by the practice of idolatry in Revelation.

So here apostate Jerusalem, in broken relation with God, was given the mystic name *Babylon, the mother of harlots*. From generations past the execration of Israel had increased from the time of prophet's reprobations in Isa. 1:21 to the Lord's lamentations in Matt. 23:29-39. By the elders of Israel the official responsibility for crucifying the Christ was placed upon Jerusalem in Matt. 27:25. The martyr Stephen laid upon Jerusalem with the criminal charges of “betrayers and murders” in Acts 7:52. The descriptions in Revelation, chapters 14:8; 17:1-6; 18:1-2 were but extensions of the same exposures in the continuing apostasies of Jerusalem.

The vision of the harlot *that sitteth upon many waters* was based upon the fact and the history that Jerusalem depended on her affiliations with the Roman Empire and its tributaries for commerce, revenue and support.

This statement has been considered an indication that the Harlot was Rome, sitting on the waters. But the same figure of speech was applied to Babylon in Jer. 51:13: "O thou that dwellest upon many waters." It was not a reference to a literal geographical location, but to commercial sources of revenue and support; and it was a very impressive imagery of Jerusalem's dependence on affiliations with the heathen tributaries of Rome.

The reference in *verse two* to the harlot's *fornication* with the kings, and the *wine of her fornication* making drunk the inhabitants of the land were symbols of the extensions of Jerusalem's affiliations with foreign people, and the passion to be like the nations around them, as Israel demanded in I Sam. 8:5. These affiliations so enamored the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem as to be characterized in the symbolism of being *drunk with the wine of her fornication*. The apocalypse was consistently that of apostate Jerusalem. It described the iniquities of Israel from their national sin of demanding a king to be as other nations under Samuel, the course that carried them into exile; and that in the visions of Revelation brought their city and their national existence to destruction.

(2) The woman on the scarlet coloured beast—17:3-8.

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

The color of the beast was derived from the *Red Dragon* of the preceding chapters that instigated the persecutions. The crimson color was also the symbol of sin: "Though your sins be as scarlet . . . though they be red like crimson" Isa. 1:18. The adaptation of the color *red* was significant in this symbol of a beast full of the sins of blasphemy.

The word *blasphemy* originally denoted every kind of railing, reviling, irreverence, and insulting reproaches against God, or any other detraction; hence, this beast was *full of names of blasphemy*—any or all blasphemy against the church that could be named in connection with or reference to every known form of heathen idolatry.

The comments on the seven heads and ten horns which

characterized the beast have been made in preceding chapters, this being the same beast, the Roman Empire and its tributaries, extended remarks here are unnecessary.

The description in *verse four*, of the woman *arrayed in purple and scarlet colour*, and bedecked with all adornments of gold, jewels and pearls, were highly extended symbols of the harlots sources of seduction; and *the golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication* were all descriptive of the lewd character of the harlot woman, and symbolic of the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem, "the faithful city become an harlot." It was a lurid picture of the spiritual condition of Jerusalem and all Judea.

The name written on the woman's head, in *verse five*, was the inscription: *Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth*. The spiritual evils of the land of Judea with all the national apostasies of Judaism were her offspring.

The prophet Hosea employed the same figure of whoredom, or harlotry, in his descriptions of Israel in chapters 1:2 and 2:1-5 of his book of prophecy. Stronger terms defining spiritual adulteries, fornications and harlotry, could not have been employed to set forth the spiritual luridness of Israel which brought on her exile—and the same extreme analogies apply to the spiritual decadence of Jerusalem which culminated in destruction, devastation downfall and termination.

The woman was envisioned as *drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*, in verse six. This not only referred to the fact that Jerusalem had slain the prophets as in Matt. 23:29-39; and been "betrayers and murderers," as charged by Stephen in Acts 7:52; and was the city "where also our Lord was crucified, as in Revelation 11:8; but it was her apostasies that had caused the persecutions which had overwhelmed the land, and Jerusalem was therefore responsible for the blood of the saints and the martyrs symbolized throughout the apocalypse.

When John saw this adorned harlot sitting on the beast, he *wondered with great admiration*. The word wonder here means that the meaning had not yet been revealed, as it

was done in the visions that followed. The word *admiration* has the meaning of astonishment—that is, John wondered with great amazement as he viewed the decked and jeweled Harlot seated on the beast whose power would bring her to destruction.

An angel cryptologist in verse seven appeared to decode the symbols which concealed in a mystery the vision of the beast upon which the woman sat. The enigmatic significance of the mystic symbolism which surrounded both the woman and the beast involved their respective destinies—the destruction of the woman (Jerusalem), and the perdition of the beast (the persecutor). The angel interpreter, proposing an explanation of the cryptic vision, repeated the wonder of the woman sitting on the seven heads and ten horns of the beast. It was a continued repetition in description of the Roman Empire, as previously shown, and of Jerusalem the apostate metropolis of Judaism.

An element of the mystery in the code description of the beast, in verse eight, was in the unusual saying: *the beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition*. Prevailing in those days was “the Neronic myth” that Nero was dead, but was incarnated in Belial the idolatrous prince and head of the heathen world; and hence, the belief that he lived. The myth could have been the basis of the symbol, which undoubtedly means the persecutor had apparently granted surcease of the persecutions, but it was only a lull—the beast that *was, and is not*, should again appear without warnings, ascending as it were from the unfathomable depths of diabolical abode. This was the same beast described in previous chapters as appearing in heaven—defined as the realm of political authorities and government, hence in visible personification. After his disappearance, or lull in persecution, he was returning from his invisible demonic habitat, as from nowhere, to revive the persecutions—hence, *the beast was, and is not, and yet is*. This verse is comparable to the code *six hundred and sixty-six* of chapter 13:18 and referred to the same composite beast—the Roman Empire, personified in the persecuting emperor.

The reappearance of the beast in the display of power again caused wonderment among the dwellers of the earth *whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*—that is, all of the people of the heathen and Roman world who were not the people of God, and had never been so reckoned, held the worldly pomp and power of the Roman emperor in great admiration. But this inhibition of the presence and power of the persecuting beast was not for long. His reappearance as a persecutor was also characterized as a final disappearance when his defeat and destiny should be accomplished—he would eventually *go into perdition*. It should be remembered that the destiny of the beast did not refer to the destruction of the empire itself but to the destruction of the persecuting power which the beast represented.

The symbols have the same force and application as Isaiah's description of the decease of the wicked lords of Babylon—referring not to the literal demise of the Babylonian empire, but to the wicked dominion over the people of God.

There is a continuous reinforcement of the parallels between the apocalypses of the fortunes of Old Testament Israel through exile to their return and the destruction of Babylonian lordship, represented by Isaiah, in chapter 66:22, as their "new heavens and the new earth"; and the apocalypses of Revelation dealing with the persecutions of the New Testament church, the destruction of the old Jerusalem, and the symbolic "new heaven and new earth" of Rev. 21:1—a delineation of the grandeurs and glories of the New Jerusalem.

(3) The great wonder comprehended—17:9-11.

"And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: fire are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."



The *mind which hath wisdom* referred to the deep mystical import of these symbols which were here merely projected but not fully explained or interpreted—the full meaning is reserved for the following chapter.

Everything in the visions revolves around the Jerusalem of the Jews, Rome being only collateral to the accomplishment of the visions. The reference to the *seven mountains* was not subject to a literal application any more than the literalizing of the woman. Mountains were ordinarily the symbols of the seats and positions of political and governmental authority, where power was concentrated. And while that was true of Rome, surrounded literally by seven hills; it was true also that Jerusalem was the city where apostasy in the realm of religious power was concentrated; and Jerusalem was also surrounded by seven literal mountains: Zion, Acra, Moriah, Bezetha, Millo, Ophel and Antonio; all of which are mentioned in the history of Josephus in connection with the war against Jerusalem (Book 5, Section 5, 8). The application of these symbols to Jerusalem finds consistency in the context.

The seven kings of *verse ten* were the imperial Caesars, of which Nero was sixth in succession from Julius. The seven mountains cannot be representative of the seven kings, since the text does not read *they are seven kings*, but "*there are seven kings.*" The text further states that *five are fallen, and one is and the other is not yet come*. Though Julius Caesar was the head of the Roman Republic, it merged into the empire; and the Roman emperors derived the official title *Caesar* from Julius.

There can be no reason in fact or history to justify omitting Julius from the count of the Caesars of Rome, and only the demands of a theory to provide a later date for Revelation has caused it to be done.

The seven kings, five of which had fallen, followed the count from Julius Caesar, the first—then, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, the *five* which had fallen—and Nero, the sixth. He was referred to in the phrase *and one is*—that is, the reigning emperor. It is further stated that *the other*, or the seventh, *is not yet*.

The five Caesars had passed before John wrote this

apocalypse; and Nero, the sixth Caesar, was reigning at the time Revelation was written. The apocalypse belonged to the Neronic period. Omitting quite properly the subordinates, or mock rulers, Domitian was the seventh Caesar; and the text specifically stated that he had not come. It is difficult to account for a theory that fixes the chronology of Revelation in the latter part of the Domitian reign when he, *the seventh*, had not come. The rectification of the traditional chronological error attached to the *Book of Revelation* will automatically correct the "future prophecy" theories so full of misconcepts.

The text stated that the seventh king, or emperor, *must continue a short space*—that is, the persecutions would not end with Nero, but would continue to be prosecuted in reigns of short duration of the successive emperors. It is stated in *verse eleven* that *the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seventh, and goeth into perdition*. There is a repetition here of *verse eight*, to which the reader may refer, concerning *was, is not, and yet is*. But *verse eleven* affirms the affinity and continuity of the imperial beasts. From the *sixth* to the *seventh* the vision was extended, in *verse ten*; and *verse eleven* presents the *eighth* as having the same genus, the spirit of the persecuting beast appearing in one emperor after another until their course was run.

To the church at Smyrna the Lord said: *And ye shall have tribulation ten days*. This undoubtedly referred to the period of the ten persecuting emperors from Nero to Diocletian, who vowed to obliterate the name *Christian* from the Roman Empire; and it fixes the time period of these apocalyptic disclosures from Nero to Diocletian, the *tenth* emperor from Nero—thus assigning the date of Revelation to the early part of Nero's reign, before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem; and its symbols to the Nero-Diocletian period of persecution.

#### (4) The coordination of the ten kings—17:12-18:

"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. These have one mind,

and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and 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. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 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. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

The ten kings of the beast in verse twelve had *received no kingdom as yet; but receive power one hour with the beast*. These mock rulers of the Roman tributaries had no independent rule; they were the contemporary subordinate rulers with the beast for *one hour*—that is, a temporary exercise of a delegated power in conjunction with Rome, but of short duration as persecutors; their power would continue no longer than the accomplishment of God's will in the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of Judaism.

It is stated in *verse thirteen* that these ten kings had *one mind*. The overshadowing personage of Nero was pictured as standing behind; but the single aim and common purpose was the destruction of Jerusalem, the devastation of Judea to rid the empire of Judaism, and the subsequent war against Christianity in the full power and strength of the coalition of the kings with the emperor against the church. Jerusalem was destroyed, Judaism perished, but the church survived.

The vision in the preceding chapters of the great red dragon's war against the Christ is continued in *verse fourteen*; but *the Lamb* would overcome all assailants and assaults against his church, *for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings*—over all kings and emperors of the earth—and because his followers *are called, and chosen and faithful*. Such fidelity cannot be extinguished by the trials of persecution.

It is repeated in *verse fifteen* that *the waters* upon which the Harlot sat were *the peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues*, which represented, as previously explained, Jerusalem's affiliations with the heathen world, and the intermingling with nations and people of all parts of the empire. This became a source of corruption and apostasy.

It is declared in *verse sixteen* that the kings of the empire, represented by the ten horns, hated the Harlot. This is solid proof that the harlot city was not Rome—assuredly the Roman kings did not hate the capital city of the Roman Empire. But they did hate Jerusalem and coordinated their efforts with the emperor to reduce it to the condition here described: *make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire*. The Lord's account of the siege of Jerusalem together with the history of Josephus were a graphic fulfillment of these apocalyptic pronouncements on apostate Jerusalem, *the faithful city become an harlot*.

The accord of these kings with the emperor was described in *verse seventeen* as being in *God's plan to fulfill his words*, spoken by his prophets, and by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, concerning the destruction of the once faithful but then harlot city of Jerusalem.

With *verse eighteen* the chapter closes with a significant declaration: *And the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth*.

It is this passage that has been the basis of the interpretation and theory that Rome was the city that *reigned over the kings of the earth*, and was therefore the harlot city. But the conclusion does not follow. In chapter 11:8 Jerusalem is called *the great city* under the symbols of Sodom and Egypt, hence the term "great city" has been a mystic designation for Jerusalem. In the history of Josephus, Volume 7 of *Wars*, Section 8, 7, the historical term "that great city" was applied to Jerusalem. This was both the historical and symbolic designation for Jerusalem. There are no such terms and titles employed to designate Rome. The appellation for Jerusalem comports further with the reference to the city as *Babylon, the Great* in chapter

11:8, symbolically called Sodom and Egypt, but identified as being Jerusalem by the statement *where also our Lord was crucified*.

The last statement of *verse eighteen* "which reigneth over the kings of the earth" did not refer to the empire of the Caesars, nor the city of the emperors. The word *reign* here denoted a *dominion*. The *earth*, as defined at the beginning of the visions and later repeated, referred to the land of Judea, inclusive of Palestine. The city of Jerusalem was the royal city where the kings of Judah reigned. The phrase *the kings of the earth* was used in the sense of Acts 4:26-27: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast annointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together."

These "kings of the earth" were of Judah, and Jerusalem was the capital city of the land, standing in the same relation to these "kings of the earth" as Rome sustained to the emperors.

The second psalm represents Jerusalem as ruling with a rod of iron over "the kings of the earth" who had set themselves against the Lord's annointed One. In the *Wars*, Book 3, Section 3, 5, Josephus adds that "the royal city Jerusalem was supreme, and presided over all neighboring country as the head does over the body."

There is every contextual reason to apply the language of *verse eighteen*, "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," to Jerusalem in relation to the kings of Judah, as figuratively set forth in the second psalm, and quoted in fulfillment in the gospel of Matthew.

Beside these scriptural applications, it must be true in ordinary logic and common consistency that the beast being the Roman empire, the harlot city which the beast hated could not have been the city of Rome.

The entire vision is centered on the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the Jewish temple and the end of theocratic Judaism and of the Jewish state; and the devastation of the land of Judea, the homeland of the

Jews. The persecution of the church was a consequence of such catastrophe, being considered by the Romans as a sect of the Jews. But the Roman empire and Rome, the city, were only collateral to the visions of Revelation as the instrument of the power of destruction and of persecution.

## XI

### THE FINAL PROCLAMATION OF DOOM ON JERUSALEM

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

The approaching fall of Jerusalem, under the symbol of Babylon was envisioned in this chapter. It pictured the overthrow of Judaism and the Jewish state as having been actually accomplished when in fact it was an apocalyptic forecast of an event still future, described in the details of past occurrence.

(1) The angel's announcement—18:1-3.

This is another instance of a proleptic utterance by an angel, as the following verses of the chapter outline the successive stages of the fall and the desolation of the Babylon-Jerusalem.

The proclamation of doom was delivered by an angel *having great power*, a power commensurate with the magnitude of the proclamation and which signified the authority to pronounce a final doom. As a result of the proclamation *the earth* (land of Judea) *was lightened with glory*, as the heavens are aglow with lightnings attending the thunders. This was symbolic of the awe and terror of the appalling events impending.

The dirge of fallen Babylon in *verse two*, was an extension of the same vision in chapter 14:8, and was substantially the same lamentation over the fall of the ancient Babylon recorded in Isaiah 21:9: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground." The Babylon of this chapter was symbolic of Jerusalem, and the voice of *verse two* was crying a threnody—a dirge of lamentation—on the day of doom for the once faithful but apostate city.

The latter part of the verse describes Jerusalem as *the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirt, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird*. The severance of all commercial affiliations by the siege of Jerusalem and the devastation of Judea, had reduced the city to a haunt, symbolized by the demoniac habitation of evil spirits, devils and vultures. The visions of the overthrow of Tyre and Babylon in the Old Testament were combined in these same symbols.



The repetition in *verse three* of the harlot's wine-cup, representing her multiplied forms of seduction. The reference to *the kings of the earth* was used in the sense of the rulers and authorities of Judea and Palestine; and the reference to *the nations* was a designation for the heathen. They were all *particeps criminis*, having drunk of the harlot's seductive wine-cup of abominations. The language was symbolic of Jerusalem's heathen affiliations. Thus the proud capital of the Jews, once the dwelling place of God and the depository of the Oracles and the center of Judaism, by apostasy had come to destruction and was reduced to a haunt of the demon-world of heathenism, the habitat of the diabolical agents of the satanic beast.

(2) The call to the faithful—18:4-8.

The voice from heaven introducing verse four was a call to the faithful saints to depart from the doomed city before the calamity struck. It is manifestly parallel with the Lord's exhortation in Matthew 24:15-16 for his faithful disciples to flee Jerusalem when the signs of the impending destruction appeared.

The same call was spiritually applied by Paul to the Corinthians (II Cor. 6:14-18), beseeching them to cut all the ties that would bind them to heathenism or in any way maintain affiliation with the heathen world and its temple of Belial. Its derived or applied meaning was to abandon all that both Judaism and heathenism represented.

The enormity of Jerusalem's sins which *reached unto heaven* are underlined in *verses five and six* in the exercise of the prerogatives that belongs only to God—"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord"—He *remembered her iniquities*, and rendered due reward *double unto double, according to her works*. Again, it was Lord's answer to the altar cry of martyrs in chapter 6:10, "how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth."

The description of the proud, and presumptuous city of David, which for centuries had enjoyed the admiration expressed in *verse seven*, to *sit as queen*, employed symbols of

glory. The old city declared that she was *no widow* and would see *no sorrow* (of widowhood), for she was the Jerusalem of the Israel which was wedded to the God of the Jews. But *verse eight* bluntly decreed that destruction would come upon her in *one day*, as suddenly as the Lord's statement in Matt. 24:16-18: "Then let them which be in Judea flee . . . let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Hence, the expression *one day* symbolized the suddenness of the impending judgment against Jerusalem and the shortness of time for the faithful to respond to the call to *come out of her*. The extended application, as in II Cor. 6:17, meant to come out of the evils and the errors of Jerusalem's apostasies and of heathendom's idolatries. The last line of verse eight, *for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her*, meant that God's word was inexorable, and without change of purpose he would destroy the apostate city.

(3) The three-fold threnody over the ruined city—18:9-19.

These verses form the threnody of kings, merchants and seamen—their song of lamentation, as a dirge over Jerusalem, the fallen city. They were represented *in verses nine and ten* as having thrived on her harlotries, but cut off from the lucrative revenues of her commerce they were envisioned as *standing afar off*, offering no help but bewailing the plight of besieged Jerusalem: *Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come*.

The statement of *verse eleven*, that *the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her* was parallel with chapter 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." This *coming* referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, as in Zechariah 14; and the declaration that *every eye shall see him* referred to the universal knowledge of what was happening to Jerusalem; and *all the kindreds (tribes) of the*

*earth shall wail* denoted the mourning of all Jewish families in all parts of the world over the destruction that had befallen their beloved city.

The rulers, merchants and mariners of Palestine bewailed the calamity *for no man buyeth their merchandise any more*. The valuables of the merchandise in which this trade consisted were listed in *verses twelve to fourteen*. The description of *gold, purple and spice* were symbols of the flow of commerce which characterized Jerusalem's prosperity. But with the severance of all trade, deprived of all commerce, the authorities of Judea, the merchants and the shippers, once associated with Jerusalem in all of her luxury and wantonness, then stood aloof as witnesses of the destruction, deploring the devastation; but only to bewail her plight.

The extensive traffic in thirty articles specified by John represented the affiliations of the Jewish capital with all the heathen world. Included in this commercial revenue was the traffic in *slaves, and souls of men*—meaning the lives of men. There was no source of revenue from the heathen world not included in the coalition between Jerusalem and the merchants of the earth, as described in *verses fifteen and sixteen*.

In continuation of this resplendent description *verses seventeen through nineteen* recorded the lamentations of the merchant-men because the luxuries and revenues in which they had shared had *come to nought* and were *no more at all*. In unison they cried: *What city is like unto this great city . . . alas, alas, that great city . . . she is made desolate*. Thus the traffickers of the heathen world lamented the ignominious end of the once glorious city of Jerusalem.

(4) The anthem of rejoicing over the fall of Apostate Jerusalem—18:20-24.

It seems unnecessary to follow the order of line by line comments on these verses, which would involve so much repetition. This last section of the chapter, *verses twenty to twenty-four*, represented John's own rhapsody of rejoicing over the avenging judgment of God on Jerusalem,

the once faithful city which had turned harlot. In contrast with the wailing of the associates in the harlotries of the city, John was joined in vision to the witnesses and apostles and saints who had been victims of Jerusalem's murderous wantonness—a united chorus in celebration of the end of the abominations of Jerusalem and the obstructions of Judaism.

The Lord foretold this fulfillment in Matt. 23:29-38: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

This anticipated fulfillment of the Lord's predictions received and written by John in the Neronian period and represented the Lord's words, "fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." In the symbols of this chapter *verse twenty-one*, the angel casts a great millstone into the sea as a sign of irretrievable doom for Jerusalem. The same symbolism was adopted in Jer. 51:63-64 to signify the end of old Babylon: "And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the

evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah."

It is appropriate that the end of the symbolic Babylon, Jerusalem should be signified by the same imagery. The symbols meant the total disappearance of both the literal and the figurative Babylons. *Verse twenty-three* includes the symbols of the crafts of prosperity, of marriages and of merriment, all of which were to be no more; and *verse twenty-four* reverted to the sins of Jerusalem in the guiltiness of *the blood of prophets, and of saints, and all that were slain upon the earth* (Matt. 23:29-39). In the avenging judgment on Jerusalem the guilt of the blood of these slain ones found retribution.

It is needless to go out of the Neronic period or away from Jerusalem to find the facts of history that meet all the demands of these apocalypses. They do not fit Rome, nor any other city than Jerusalem; where the prophets, apostles and saints were slain. The usual interpretation to bring the apocalypse down through the ages to stage again the historical pageantry of the Roman empire, in the effort to find a future fulfillment, takes all the force out of the words of Christ in Matthew 23 and 24, and robs the apocalypse of its immediate message. The apostate Jerusalem was the object of the visions of Revelation, and all things else in the book were collateral to the implementation of the symbols.

The readers should not fail to consider that all these visions were recorded before the events occurred, therefore bearing a pre-destruction of Jerusalem date; and Revelation takes its place alongside the Lord's own forecast of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, some thirty-seven years before the siege of Jerusalem, the Revelation itself bearing the date of the early part of the Neronic reign, several years previous to A. D. 70, when Jerusalem was besieged and later desolated.

It is evident that the visions of Revelation belong to the *ten days* period of Roman emperors from Nero to Diocletian, the period of the persecution of the church resulting from the destruction of Jerusalem. It is not a sane interpretation of the apocalyptic symbols to pass over

the corresponding events of history then in process—the current events and the contemporary kings of Rome and Judah—in order to link the fulfillment of these symbols to future events which, if they should come to pass, could not provide a more perfect similitude between the symbol and the event that fulfills it than was present in the events of the history surrounding Jerusalem and Judah; and which followed in immediate rapid succession the fall of Jerusalem, Judaism and the Jewish state.

The theories of futurism would revive kingdoms that have perished, and their kings who have turned to dust; and after several thousands of years in an ultra-special sort of resurrection stage a historical pageant to parade them all before the world again in order to meet the demands of a future fulfillment of Revelation. It is not compatible with the announced purpose of the book nor the character of its symbols, the fulfillment of which was accomplished in the corresponding events of that period, and in the experiences of the churches then living—events long ago committed to the annals of history and to the archives of earth's treasures.

Jerusalem had filled up the measure of its sin of the slain prophets and servants of God and the rejection of the Son of God, the Saviour of man. It had therefore to expiate the guilt incurred by Israel and officially accepted by the officials of the nation: *His blood be upon our heads and upon the heads of our children*. With this vision the judgment on Jerusalem was completed and sealed.

## XII

### THE VISION OF VICTORY (Chapter 19)

“1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluja; 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, Alleluja. 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; Alleluja. 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 thunderings, saying, Alleluja: 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. 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, 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 name 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. 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; 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."

There is a striking analogy between these scenes of the church emerging in victory from the period of persecution, described by John in this *nineteenth* chapter, and the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian exile, described by Ezekiel in the closing section of his prophecy from the *thirty-sixth* to the *thirty-ninth* chapters.

The nation of Israel was comforted, and their release was described in terms of a figurative resurrection; and the return to their homeland was pictured as a "new heaven and a new earth." (Isa. 66:22) The closing chapters of Revelation from chapter *nineteen* to *twenty-two* follow the course of Ezekiel's apocalypse of Israel returning from the seventy years of exile, but here the church was seen emerging from the period of persecution. The symbols are similar, and the parallel is evident.

(1) The heavenly acapella chorus—19:1-6.

The great catastrophe of Revelation, the fall of symbolic Babylon, Jerusalem, also called Sodom and Egypt, bringing an end to Judaism, was envisioned as having occurred. The harps and harpers ceased, giving place to *a great voice of much people* rejoicing over the vindication of divine justice, in answer to the cry of the *souls of the slain* under the altar, who as a martyred host responded in the *alleluia* (hallelujah) of the heavenly chorus.

The word *alleluia*, in *verse one*, meant *praise ye the Lord*. In this equivalent it is used first in Psalms 104:35;



thereafter it is used repeatedly to introduce and end the chapters in the Psalms. The word *alleluia* itself is used only in the *nineteenth* chapter of Revelation, verses 1, 3, 4, 6, which lends special significance to the chorus of the heavenly multitude praising God for *Salvation* from enemies, and *righteous judgments* on Jerusalem; and for avenging the blood of the martyrs. This was the reason for the ascription of special praise, as indicated in *verse two*. It was not the general or usual form of worship and praise, but a special *hallelujah* for *true and righteous* retribution on the harlot woman—apostate Jerusalem—and her affiliates. The words of *verse 3* decreed that this judgment was a pronouncement of final doom on Jerusalem. *And her smoke rose up forever and ever*. This was the declaration that the old Jerusalem would never be restored. It is the parallel of the Lord's declaration in Luke 21:24: "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"—which meant that Jerusalem was permanently trodden down; for *the times of the Gentiles* and *the fulness of the Gentiles* were commensurate with the entire gospel dispensation. A comparison of the preposition *until* with such passages as Luke 16:16; Gal. 3:19; 4:2; Heb. 9:10 will exemplify that *until* signified termination.

For further treatment of the *times* and *fulness* of the Gentiles in relation to Jerusalem, reference to *GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD* (pp. 152-155), is suggested.

Among the heavenly worshippers were listed *the four and twenty elders* of *verse four*, a symbol based on the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles, representative of the whole and true Israel of God—the church; as discussed in chapters 5, 8, 14, and 11:18. The song of praise was an anthem of victory for the whole church.

The *voice from the throne*, in *verses five and six*, proclaimed in mighty volume that *the Lord God omnipotent (Almighty) reigneth*; which was manifested in the destructions of the Harlot woman, and the defeat of the persecuting agencies of the Roman beast. The universal aspect of this joyful victory was expressed in the refrain: *Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both*

*small and great*—all classes of men who were servants of God were bidden to rejoice. The greatness of the heavenly multitude joined in chorus as one voice, *verse six*, was not only a scene of awe and veneration, but was impressive of the magnitude of the significance attached to the end of Jerusalem and the Jewish state, and the removal of Judaism as the greatest obstacle to the expansion of Christianity from the path of the church. With the Harlot City, and the system of Judaism which she represented destroyed; there remained only the execution of judgment against political minions who had shared in her spiritual fornications and abominations.

(2) The marriage supper of the Lamb—19:7-10.

The symbolism expressed in *the marriage of the Lamb* of *verse seven*, signified the blessed union of the church with Christ, the Head. But the use of the symbol here did not signify that the church had not been thus related to Christ before this apocalypse. The apostle, in Rom. 7:4, represented the marital union of Christ and the church as bringing forth the fruit of wedlock in spiritual offspring. If the marriage did not exist the fruit would be illegitimate. The marriage union of Christ and the church is not a single act or thing. Every union of a believer with Christ in baptism is marriage to Christ, and is representative of the whole relation.

This marriage occurs every time one is baptized into Christ, and it is therefore always in process and is continuous. The accentuation on the marriage to Christ in this context was due to the interference of the persecutions with gospel evangelization. Now, that the persecutors were overcome, conversions to Christ would again prevail; hence, the renewed symbol of marriage.

As the marriage itself is continuous, so must be the marriage supper, and it symbolized the continuous fellowship of all who are united to Christ; and it is as continuous as the baptism of believers and of the church itself. This part of the song of victory was based on the renewal of the interrupted fellowship of Christians by the afflictions and the tribulations of persecution.

The figurative clause *his wife hath made herself ready* was the symbol of victory over the evil forces of opposition—the verse declares that she was already his wife, and envisions the spiritual relation as a complete process, not as a single thing.

That the Lamb's wife should be *arrayed in fine linen, clean and white* was explained to be the *righteousness of the saints*, the purity of the New Jerusalem church in contrast with the iniquities of the harlot Jerusalem, which had gone up in the smoke of destruction forever. This attire of *clean and white* vestures was a beautiful symbol of the character of all who are truly joined in union with Christ. They were the ones *called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb*, the equal in number of all who were in the married relation with Christ. This metaphor comparable to the illustration of the wedding garment in the parable of Matt. 22:11-13, which was necessary to entrance into the feast; without which the intruder would have been cast out. The guests of the marriage feast were themselves the Bride in the parable, and parallel with *they which are called unto the marriage supper in verse nine* of this chapter. They were equal in number with the church itself.

The angelic admonition in *verse nine* for John to *write* was addressed personally to him, by the voice from the throne, not by an angel, and indicated the distinguished honor of being the recipient of the revelation of these things of such tremendous significance.

Having unfolded the visions in two parts, the closing scene of the second part put the emphasis on the state of blessed union with Christ of all who had overcome the trials and tribulations attending the fall of the harlot Babylon. Angels could have no higher or holier relation.

The epilogue, *these are the true sayings of God*, meant that they were not mere words of John in visional narration, or of the angels; but they were the very words of God to the Seer; the directly inspired words of God.

In this connection it was twice repeated that, *He saith unto me*. The equivalent of these words occurs several hundred times in the Old Testament, and is repeatedly

affirmed in the New Testament. The positive affirmation of this verbal inspiration is affirmed throughout all the scriptures; but has been marred and mutilated by the sacrilegious pseudo-translations of the perverted new versions. They have been advertised as *new* translations, but they are in fact *no* translations. They ruin Revelation as they do all other portions of the verbally inspired word of God.

The words of the angel had impressed John as a message direct from God; and *verse ten* stated that *he fell at his feet to worship him*. In bodily prostration John was about to worship the angel. But the angel refused the homage, saying, *See thou do it not: I am a fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God*. This testimony of Jesus had reference to the message of Revelation; and being a fellowservant with *thy brethren* was an expression of humility as expressed by John himself in chapter 1:9.

The closing statement of this section, *in verse ten*, is: *For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*. The word *spirit* here does not signify the Holy Spirit, but rather the inner spirit, the vital element, the life and soul—the essence of the apocalypse was the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ to his servant John by his servants, the angels.

### (3) The vision of Christ the conqueror—19:11-16.

After the symbolic Babylon, the Sodom-Egypt, apostate harlot-Jerusalem had been utterly overthrown; the temple demolished and Judaism removed; and the Jewish state terminated; all that Jerusalem represented no longer existent—then the visions of Revelation turned to the victory of the church over heathenism. The visions of this conflict were presented in the language of high symbols, and there is danger of literalism in their application.

In *verses eleven through fourteen*, a name was given to the Rider of the white horse; he was called *Faithful and True*. He was the Christ himself, leading the procession of triumph, with a heavenly army consisting of the legion of martyrs and overcomers of persecution, to wage war against Caesar-worship and heathenism. With him in this

glorious war of Christ against idolatry were *the chosen faithful* who shared the triumph of the procession of victory. He was identified as the same Rider of the white horse in chapter 6:2; then going forth to conquer, but now in procession of victory over the imperial persecutors; to *judge* and *make war* against all heathenism. This war was to be waged by the *sharp sword* which proceeded *out of his mouth*—that is, a war on the heathen minions by the word of God, the two-edged sword of Heb. 4:12, and the sword of the Spirit of Eph. 6:17. His descriptions were put in symbols of a royal and ruling conqueror, which compared with the array of the Son of man in the midst of the seven churches in chapter 1:13-16. The vestures of the Rider were *dipped in blood*, an imagery of the battle with the persecuting beasts who had slain the martyrs and had shed the blood of the saints. With the heavenly army Christ, the Rider, subsequent to the extermination of Judaism, was seen marching against the strongholds of heathenism.

In *verse twelve* it is stated that the Conqueror had another name—a *name written which no man knew, but he himself*—which indicated the things of God and Christ unrevealed to me. It compares with the statement of Jesus in Matt. 11:27: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” Jesus Christ alone has “a name above every name,” which signifies a power over heaven and earth that no one can know but Himself—the sole owner of the name and the one possessor of the inherent power of the undefined and unrevealed name.

In *verse thirteen*, the Rider was called by a third name—*The Word of God*. The *Word* was not a name without significance. The same John of the apocalypse referred to the Son of God as the Word in the gospel of John 1:1-14. The *word* is the vehicle of conveying thoughts—and Jesus Christ was the full and complete expression of God’s will to man; the beginning and the end of all revelation; hence, his title *The Word*. The name *The Word Of God*, signifies the armament of the warfare in which he was in this vision

to engage—it was the conflict of Christianity with heathenism, and the *truth* was the weapon against all error.

In *verse fourteen* the armies that followed Him *upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean*, were the overcomers of the tribulation—redeemed from the period of persecution. In *verse fifteen* it was declared that the Rider would *smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron*. The process of this smiting was indicated in God's commission to Jeremiah, chapter 1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." In the Revelation text the phrases, *smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron*, were symbolic of the impact of the gospel on the heathen world. This inherent power and force of Christianity was prophesied in the second psalm, chapter 2:1-3: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

The psalm prophecy is quoted by the apostle Peter in Acts 4:25-26 with this application of the effect of preaching Christ to the heathen world. The ruling with *a rod of iron* referred to the inexorable character of the law of Christ—the invincible word of God. The treading of *the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God* was the symbol of the execution of the inflexible judgment of retribution. And in Revelation it was *Almighty God*, the supreme Judge of all men, who should formulate the sentence and render the judgment against the heathen nations.

In *verse sixteen* a fourth name was inscribed on the Rider—*King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. This was the highest title to be conferred. It symbolized the position and power over all kings and rulers of all rank in the heathen world, all of whom must yield to the invincible *Word of God*. This stage of the vision was in repetition of chapter 11:15: *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*. It was the sublime apocalypse of the conquering Lord, and his victorious

church. The conquest of "the kingdoms of this world" was spiritual, not literal; and it was to be accomplished by the spread of the gospel and expansion of Christianity over the heathen world, as stated in Matt. 24:31 and as prophesied in the second Psalm.

The names and insignia attached to the Rider comport with the Psalm prophecy and with all the divine offices of the Christ Rider. His insignia were: the white horse, the diadems, the blood-dipped garments, the flaming eyes, and the inscribed name, unknown to men. His divine works were: to judge, to wage war, to smite with a verbal sword, to tread the winepress of God's wrath, and to rule with the inflexible iron rod of the inexorable law of the Christ.

#### (4) The great sacrificial Supper—19:17-18.

These verses represented a feast on the flesh of kings consumed by the birds of prey and was one of the most highly metaphorical sections of the entire series of visions. In Matt. 24:28, Jesus said: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." This forecast was the Lord's illustration of the siege of Jerusalem, which was the carcass; and the Romans were the eagles, whose armies swooped on Jerusalem to destroy and devour it. But in this vision the metaphor was reversed. The rulers of the persecuting powers, with all the forces opposing Christ and his church, were the victims of this *supper of the Great God*. The sacrifice of animals was the common method of celebrating victories; such as king Saul, without warrant, had presumptuously planned in celebration of victory over Amalek, as recorded in I Sam. 15:15, 21. Here in this vision the eating of the flesh of kings, as the victims of the sacrificial supper, was symbolic of the victory of the saints over all the persecuting powers of the heathen governments, including all Roman tributaries which were the minions of the composite Roman beast. This symbolic representation was a repetition of the previous figurative descriptions of the fearful visitations of divine wrath on the wicked persecutors, which no kings or rulers of nations could withstand.

The same metaphorical representation of the celebration of the return of Israel from exile, subsequent to the fall of Babylon, was employed by Ezekiel in chapter 39:17-20: "And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God."

It is apparent that this sacrificial supper in Revelation was the vision of celebration for the triumph of the church over all the forces of heathenism. The inclusion in the metaphor of the flesh of kings, and *the flesh of captains, 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* meant that no class or condition of men in the heathen society which formed a part of the forces of persecution and of opposition to the church, were exempt from retribution; but were all alike victims of this symbolic celebration of the victory over heathenism in the sacrificial *supper of the great God*.

The vision of the *angel standing in the sun*, of *verse seventeen*, indicated not only the glory of this messenger of Christ, but the central station from which to summon the *fowls that fly in the midst of heaven*. The word *heaven* in the previous visions has designated the ruling authorities of the *earth*, or place of the nations. The reference to the fowls in the *mid-heaven* indicated that the birds of prey, symbolizing this awesome picture of visitation of divine wrath, were flyng in the very midst of these evil authorities ready to descend on the carrion of the pagan persecuting powers, the defeated forces of heathenism.

The foregoing descriptions were designed to symbolize



that no class or condition, high or low, in the heathen world could stand against the spiritual forces of Christ, the Conqueror and Rider of the white horse—and from this imagery of spiritual victory over all the forces of heathenism, the vision turns to the scene of judgment and final banishment of the Roman beast and his subordinate beast, the false prophet, who had beguiled the people into the emperor-image worship, and who was the original source of the spiritual war delineated in the apocalypse.

(5) The complete destruction of the persecuting power of the Roman beast and his subordinate false prophet—19:19-21.

The fact that these visions anticipated events before, during and after the destruction of Jerusalem, should be observed and retained in the mind, as the considerations advance from one stage and scene to another.

The scene of verses nineteen to twenty-one reverted to the spiritual battle between the heavenly armies of the Rider, and the armies of the Roman beast—the heathen persecutor. It was after the destruction of Jerusalem; and after the evil forces of heathenism were diverted from the scene of Jerusalem and Judaism to converge on the church. But the vision saw the triumph of Christianity. It was declared in *verse twenty* that *the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet . . . with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image*. This beast was the original first sea-beast of chapter 13—personified in the emperor, the source of authority for all the persecutions. The false prophet was identical with the second land-beast, of Judea and Palestine, described in chapter 13, as the subordinate of the imperial beast who seduced the inhabitants of Judea to worship the emperor. As previously postulated, the mark of the beast was submission to the decree for emperor worship and acceptance of the image of the emperor as deity and the worship of the Roman image in acts of idolatry for the emperor.

After accomplishing the destruction of Jerusalem and the obliteration of the Jewish state, the vision represents

the beast as having lost the battle against the church. The invincible spiritual forces of Christianity prevailed against all powers of heathenism, and both the beast and his satellite false prophet were *taken*; that is, captured and consigned to the bottomless pit of banishment, symbolized by *the lake of fire burning with brimstone*. The object of this vision was to symbolize the war of righteousness led by Christ Himself, the Head of the church, against the wickedness of heathenism. It described the progress of the persecution of the church, after the fall of Jerusalem, through the period of *tribulation* of chapter 2:10; and of *the hour of trial* in chapter 3:10; in the deadly conflict with the heathenism of the Roman world.

The entire second psalm is a magnificent prophecy of the defeat of all the cohorts of heathenism by the King whom God had set "upon the holy hill of Zion," and is worthy of insertion here in its entirety:

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

This psalm was quoted more than once in the New Testament as having fulfillment in the universal expansion of the kingdom of Christ. The messianic psalm finds its climax

in these visions of Revelation where the "heathen raged" and "the kings of the earth set themselves . . . against his Anointed." The rulers did "take counsel together," and determined to "break their bands asunder," and thus to scatter the forces of the Anointed; but "the Lord shall have them in derision" and "shall break them with a rod of iron" which was done in the descriptions and fulfillment of these visions. In this imagery the Psalmist foresaw the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, and the defeat of all heathen opposition by the gospel's *rod of iron*—the invincible *Word of Truth*.

The apocalypse of these last verses of chapter *nineteen* follows the same pattern in visions of the defeat of the hosts opposing Christ. The second Psalm decreed that *thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*, and the apocalypse declared that they *were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone*. One of these passages cannot be considered more or less literal than the other—both were figurative expressions which signified the utter end of the persecuting authorities of heathenism against Christianity. The phrase *cast alive into a lake of fire* was equivalent to *burned alive*, and it symbolized complete destruction. The signal triumph of the cause of truth represented by the burning alive of the beast and the false prophet did not symbolize the destruction of the Roman Empire, but of the persecutions waged by the emperors, which the beasts represented. The lake of fire was not literal any more than the beast was literal. Neither was subject to literal application—both were figurative. The beast symbolized the persecuting power of the Roman emperor; and casting him into *a lake of fire* signified the complete defeat of the heathen powers he represented in the war against the church; and it was accomplished by the sword that *proceeded out of the mouth* of Jesus Christ, the Rider of the white horse. The sword was not a literal steel blade; it was the Word of God, the weapon by which the church won the victories over heathenism and idolatry; and which is even yet the only righteous weapon in the warfare of the truth against error.

The last passage of this chapter *verse twenty-one*, was

the brief vision of the defeat of *the remnant* which had been *slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse*. This remnant symbolized the enemies of Christ other than the persecuting beasts. It represented all forms of error and evil and doctrines of antichrist that stood in the way of the church. They were slain with *the sword of him that sat upon the horse*; and the text identified the sword by the modifying phrase: *which sword proceeded out of his mouth*—the Word of God. By his word all forms of heathenism were exposed and the enemies of his cause, in the battle imagery, were *slain*, or defeated. They were figuratively slain, by a figurative sword: *which sword proceeded out of his mouth*—that is, by the teaching of the truth and the spread of the gospel.

To complete the visional and metaphorical picture, chapter *nineteen* ends with *verse twenty-one* in the final statement: *And all the fowls were filled with their flesh*. As the birds devour the carrion, the truth consumes every form of error inimical to the cause of Jesus Christ.

The Lord foretold that this result would follow the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:31: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The equivalent declaration of the apocalypse is in chapter 11:15: "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." Another parallel to this Revelation passage is the reference of Paul in Eph. 5:5 to the inheritance in "the kingdom of Christ and of God." The kingdom is *everlasting*; the inheritance is *eternal*; and therefore the reign is *forever and ever*.

These parallels between the Lord's account of these events in advance of their occurrences, and the visions of John in anticipation of the same series of events, have formulated accumulative evidence throughout the book, that the apocalypses of Revelation were but the extension of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew—the Lord's own

forecast of the events preceding and subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem.

### XIII

#### THE BINDING OF SATAN AND THE REIGN OF THE SAINTS WITH CHRIST (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. 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. 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. 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. 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."

The last three chapters of Revelation were sequel to the visions of conflict in the preceding nineteen chapters, and presented in contrast a pageant of victory. Beginning with the *twentieth* chapter a new picture was presented, an imagery of changed conditions. With the close of the *nineteenth* chapter, Jerusalem had fallen, and the great symbolic enemies of the Cause of Christ—the beast and the false prophet—had been consigned to visional banishment. The dragon who instigated both the activities of the imperial beast and the deceptions of the false prophet (the land-beast) was about to be cast into the abyss, *the bottomless pit*, and thus be returned to his diabolical region in complete defeat. The *twentieth* chapter opened with the scenes of the culmination and climax of the great conflict.

This chapter has been full of confusion and the source of insurmountable difficulties, all of which have been due to the anachronism of wresting its contents from the period of the imperial persecutors and projecting its visions into centuries yet future for fulfillment. This has been the great mistake of attempting to make the book of Revelation a compendium of history—a thing that it is not. In the structural unity and orderly development of the Revelation, chapter *twenty* was the beginning of the scenes that made the victory of the church over hostile nations final and complete. Although the picture had changed, the continuity of the apocalyptic imagery in chapter *twenty* remained unbroken.

The apostate harlot Jerusalem had fallen; the great red

dragon deceiver had been cast down from the position of assumed exaltation to his place in the abyss; the *souls* of the martyrs were no longer under the *altar* of a persecuted cause, but in the figurative first resurrection they have been elevated to *thrones*, reigning with Christ in the state of complete victory symbolized by *thousand years*; the surcease of persecution had come, symbolized by the *binding of Satan*, and his imprisonment to estop the source of deceiving the nations of the empire into the idolatry of emperor-worship; the persecutors represented as dead, *lived not again*; and the wicked nations stood in judgment before the *great white throne* of an avenging God. But the spiritual conflict between heathenism and Christianity was not abated by the cessation of the activities of the persecuting powers; and through this idolatry of paganism the influence of Satan was represented as *loosed out of his prison* to destroy the church, not by the weapon of persecution but by concentrating all the heathen forces of *Gog and Magog*, the symbolic head of heathendom, into spiritual battle against *the beloved city*—the New Jerusalem which symbolized the church. Again, in the final scene, the cause of the Christ triumphed over all the influences of the heathen world, and all the enemies of the church were made to *stand before God* to be judged *according to their works*.

(1) The twentieth chapter of Revelation.

It is a common expression, we hear it on every hand; that *the Bible plainly says that Christ will reign on the earth a thousand years*. That is something that the Bible nowhere says, plainly or vaguely. Like the *battle of Armageddon* notion, the millennium imagination is not in the Bible. Armageddon is mentioned in the Bible but the “battle of Armageddon” *theory* is nowhere found in the scriptures. The Bible has something to say about “a thousand years” but nothing about *a thousand years reign on the earth*. Christ reigns, but the reign of Revelation 20 was not the reign of Christ. It was rather a peculiar and special reign of certain souls *with Christ*. It does not mention or refer to the reign *of Christ*. The ones mentioned were reigning; it was a special use of the word, applied to a

special incident of the Revelation vision. The text says *they* lived and reigned. Where did they live and reign? They lived and reigned *with Christ*. John saw souls out of the body, not in the body. It was a vision of the souls of the martyrs living and reigning with Christ in a particular and peculiar sense.

In a conversation with any group of denominational preachers one will invariably be heard to say that the Bible plainly says that we shall reign with Christ on earth a thousand years. When the assserter is asked for the passage that so plainly says it, he will just as invariably and confidently refer his listeners to Revelation 20, verse 4. It is in order, in time and in place now to dissect this misunderstood and misapplied passage of scripture.

This is the way it reads: *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.* The passage is almost universally believed to actually say that we shall reign with Christ on earth a thousand years. The text says, *they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*. The pronoun *we* is a personal pronoun of first person, but *they* is a personal pronoun of the third person; the verbs *lived* and *reigned* are verbs of past tense; but *shall live and reign* are verbs of future tense. No man can claim the right to change the sentence of this text from the third personal pronoun *they* to the first personal pronoun *we*, nor to change the verbs *lived* and *reigned* of the past tense to *shall live and reign* of future tense. That is too much change for any man to make who has an ounce of respect for the word of God.

John said, "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The passage says nothing about "the thousand years reign of Christ." There is a great difference in the two expressions. Revelation 20 says, "they lived and reigned with Christ." They who? Lived—lived where? Reigned—how, with whom and where? "Lived and reigned"—with



whom, in what place? It is not the reign of Christ, but the reign of souls "with Christ," that is mentioned in Revelation 20. There is a vast difference between living and reigning "with Christ" and a millennial reign "of Christ." So let us be true to the facts in the case. It does not mention the reign of Christ, but the reign of souls "with" him. They not only "reigned" with him, they "lived" with him. They "lived and reigned" with Christ a thousand years. The two verbs "lived" and "reigned" are both limited by the thousand years. If the expression denotes time, then when the reign is over, and they ceased to reign; the living would be over and they would cease to live.

Revelation 20:1-6 does not mention the second coming of Christ. That is not the subject of it. It does not mention a bodily resurrection, and that is not the subject of it. It does not mention a reign on the earth, nor does it mention the "reign of Christ"—and neither is the subject. Is it not possible for souls to live and reign "with Christ" without Christ being on earth? Furthermore, it does not mention the throne of David or any other throne on earth. And it does not mention either Jerusalem or Palestine, nor does it mention Christ on earth.

Jesus said that Jerusalem is not the place where men should worship (Jno. 4:21), but they want to put it there. He said that his kingdom is not of the world (Jno. 18:36), but they want to put it here, and make it of the world. Can millennialists consistently say that though it mentions none of these things, it teaches all of them? It is altogether possible and consistent for all the things mentioned to exist without being on the earth.

## (2) The thousand years reign with Christ.

There are twenty figures of speech in the *nineteenth* and *twentieth* chapters alone. In a series of symbols such as these, it is not reasonable to make a literal application of the thousand years and a figurative application of all the rest of the symbols, without a contextual or historical reason for doing so. The thousand years, like the other parts of the vision, is a figure of speech—a symbol of something else.

It is said in Deut. 7:9 that God keeps his covenant and his mercy unto a thousand generations. God does not count a literal thousand generations, then quits remembering his covenant. It means God's memory of and faithfulness to his covenant are perfect and complete. The term *thousand* was a figure of *completeness*. It does not denote a cycle of time.

Then what about the millennium? Nothing was said of a millennium. The thousand years did not mean a millennium. There is no millennium. There never was a millennium. There never will be a millennium. The *twentieth* of Revelation did not refer to a millennium. The thousand years was not literal, therefore was not a millennium and has no reference to a millennium. There is no connotation for the notion. The magic word *millennium* is not in the text.

In this vision John "saw thrones" and the ones that "sat on them." And those whom he *saw* were the *souls* of the *beheaded*. They had not "worshipped" the beast. They had not "received" his mark, and *they* "lived" and "reigned" with Christ.

First: *They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*. It does not mention the second coming of Christ, a bodily resurrection, a reign on the earth, or a literal throne in Jerusalem or elsewhere. It does not mention us, and it does not mention Christ on earth. Revelation 20 mentions none of those things, and a curse was pronounced on the one who adds to the words of the book.

Second: *They lived and reigned with Christ*. It says "they"—the souls of the martyrs, those who were beheaded. The beheaded souls lived and reigned with Christ. Only those who were beheaded entered into that thousand years. If that thousand years is literal, then the beheading is literal, and only those literally beheaded get into the millennium. If the beheading is figurative, the thousand years is figurative, and that cuts us out; for there could be no literal millennium. If it is a literal thousand years, it is a literal beheading. If it is a figurative beheading, it is a figurative thousand years, and either way there is no millennium for us.

Third: They *lived and reigned*. If the term “reigned” is limited by a thousand years, the verb “lived” is also limited by a thousand years. If the reigning ends with the thousand years, the living ends with a thousand years, and the millennium will end with everybody in it ceasing to live. That would be quite a hopeless millennium.

### (3) The meaning of the first resurrection.

The expression *this is the first resurrection* is itself the proof that reference was made to a figurative resurrection. The word was being used in an unusual sense, so unusual that it was necessary for John to explain its use by saying, “this” is the first resurrection—that is why John explained that *this* is what was meant by the symbol.

The resurrection of the *twentieth* chapter of Revelation was a figurative or spiritual resurrection, and of the same character described by Ezekiel concerning Israel in captivity. The prophet Ezekiel was in Babylon with exiled Israel, and prophesied their return from Babylon in the vision of Ezek. 37:1-14:

“The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord, thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and I will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to bone, and when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, prophecy unto the

wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as I was commanded, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold they say, Our bones are dried and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves. And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, said the Lord."

Here was the description of a resurrection extraordinary, indeed. Taking Israel out of the land of their captivity and bringing them back to their own land was called a resurrection. They were in the grave of captivity in Babylon, yet they were a living people. God said that he *opened their graves* and brought them out and *caused them to live*—in their return to Judea and restoration to their land and their religion.

Now hear Isaiah, who prophesied the Babylonian exile one hundred years in advance: "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish"—Isa. 26:13-19. The reference here was to the wicked lords of the Old Testament. They were exercising dominion over God's oppressed people. They were "lords" over God's people. Isaiah said, other lords once had "dominion" over them, but they were "dead," and should not "live"; they were "deceased," and should "not rise." This could not mean that the wicked will not be raised from the dead. It could not mean that the wicked

dead will not live again. If that is what it means, there will be no resurrection of the wicked, and a fundamental truth is thereby denied. But that is not the meaning. Here is the meaning: The dominion of the wicked lords over God's people would be put down. While these lords had dominion over God's people they were said to "live"—live in their dominion. When their dominion should be destroyed and the oppression of God's people brought to an end, these lords would be "dead"—they were *dead as lords*. They *shall not live*—that is, their dominion would not exist again.

But speaking of the persecuted people of God, the prophet said: "thy dead men shall live." When Israel was in the bondage of the captivity of these lords, they were said to be *dead*—they were dead as a people in captivity; and the wicked lords were said to *live*—that is, in power and dominion. But when the dominion of the lords ended, they were demised, their power was deceased—they were dead; they should not "live" in wicked dominion; they should not "rise" as lords. In the opposite imagery of the prophecy Israel in captivity was in a state called "dead," though living. Isaiah said "They shall live" and "they shall rise." Thus coming out of *the grave of their captivity* represented a resurrection, but not a literal resurrection—it was a figurative resurrection. Now that was exactly the kind of resurrection pictured in Revelation 20. One was the description of the persecuted Israel in the Old Testament; the other was the description of the persecuted church in the New Testament. The principle is the same.

Another example is in Paul's reference to the spiritual resurrection of Israel: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"—Rom. 11:15. When the Jews were converted to Christ under the gospel, it was the receiving of them "as life from the dead." That is another figurative resurrection—a spiritual resurrection.

When John saw the souls of the martyrs, slain for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God "under the altar" (chapter 6); then saw the same souls "on thrones" (chapter 20); it was a vision of victory. Taking the souls from

beneath the altar and elevating them to the thrones was called a resurrection in exactly the same sense that bringing the people of Israel out of bondage in Babylon was opening their graves and causing them to “live”—a figurative death and a figurative resurrection.

A comparison here of two passages in the apocalypse will further reveal the nature of the resurrection of the twentieth chapter of Revelation.

First: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death”—2:11.

Second: “He that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power”—20:6.

Picturing in advance the persecutions of the early Christians, John declared in Rev. 2:11 that *he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death*. But in Rev. 20:6, the same apostle speaking to the same persons, said, *he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power.*” Thus to have part in the first resurrection equaled exemption from the second death. But to overcome these persecutions equaled exemption from the second death.

1. Overcoming the persecutions equaled exemption from the second death.

2. Part in the first resurrection equaled exemption from the second death.

3. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.

4. Overcoming the persecutions and part in the first resurrection were equal to the same thing, therefore they were equal to each other.

To support the theory of a future millennial reign of Christ, efforts are made to connect Rev. 2:25-28 and 3:21-25 with Rev. 20:1-6, as referring to the second coming of Christ, when he shall then give the saints “power over the nations,” and he shall then “rule them with a rod of iron”—in the millennium. Such an interpretation charges that Jesus deceived the church at Thyatira into believing that he would come during their lifetime. It should be observed again, as previously detailed in Section Two, that the “coming” of Christ is mentioned in several senses,

elsewhere in the New Testament, and in Revelation. To Ephesus, Pergamos, Sardis and Laodicea, Christ said he would "come." He would come in the events named, in things promised or threatened. To Thyatira he said: 1. To hold fast. 2. To overcome. 3. To keep his works. All of that "till I come," which obviously did not refer to his second coming. Furthermore, the expressions in verses 26-28 were indicative of things that would occur in the life period of Thyatira: 1. Power over the nations—the influence of the gospel in breaking the power of pagan persecutions and the heathen nations. 2. Rod of iron—the irresistible influence of Christ in the preaching and lives of early Christians, exemplified even in martyrdom. 3. The morning star—the exalted place of those who overcome, next to Christ, in his glorious empire, the church.

On the same erroneous premises it is held that Rev. 3:21-22 makes a distinction between the Father's throne, upon which Christ is asserted to occupy now, and Christ's own throne which it is claimed he will occupy when he returns. But the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are one kingdom (Eph. 5:5); and the church of God and the church of Christ are one church (I Thess. 1:1; 2:14); and the throne of God and the throne of Christ are one throne (Heb. 1:8). Christians share Christ's kingdom now (Luke 22:29); and they share his throne now (Rev. 3:21-22).

For further textual comparisons, in Matt. 19:28 it is stated that "in the regeneration" Jesus would sit on the throne of his glory, and in Matt. 19:28 it is stated that the twelve apostles would occupy the thrones of authority in the same dispensation of regeneration. In Tit. 3:4-5 Paul identified this gospel dispensation as "the regeneration." So in this dispensation Christ is occupying "the throne of his glory." A comparison of Matt. 20:21 and Mark 10:37 will prove that his kingdom and his glory are identical. A further comparison of Lk. 24:26 and Heb. 1:8 will show that entering into his kingdom and glory was connected with his ascension.

In Matt. 19:28, Jesus said that the disciples who had *followed* him would *sit on thrones*. But in Luke 22:28 he

declared that the disciples who had *continued* would be *appointed the kingdom*. Therefore to occupy thrones in this gospel dispensation was the same thing as to be appointed the kingdom—and both relations between Christ and Christians exist now.

In this gospel dispensation Christ is on the throne of his glory (Matt. 19:28); and he is on the throne of his kingdom. (Heb. 1:8)

This occupancy of his kingdom—glory throne extends from his ascension (Lk. 24:26) to his coming (I Cor. 15:23-24). Christians who overcome “sit with him in his throne” now. They share his throne in the same sense, degree and extent that they share his glory and his kingdom, shown by the comparisons of these passages.

These considerations destroy the millennial interpretation of the Father’s throne and the Son’s throne, as respects a distinction and a difference between them, and refute their interpretations of all the Revelation passages forced to serve their theory.

The closing scene of Revelation was pictured in chapters 20, 21 and 22 in a general summary of the elegant truths of the vision in relation to the obligations of the triumphant church, emerging from persecution and oppression into glorious victory.

As a sequel to the vision of victory, the last chapters of Revelation present the church garbed in the robes of victory “as a bride adorned for her husband.” The figure does not indicate that the church is not now the bride of Christ, as some have assumed. Rather, the apostle declares in Rom. 7:4 that the church has been married to Christ and has brought forth fruit unto God in that relationship. The expression “as a bride adorned” was a comparison only—a graphic description of the grandeur of the triumphant church adorned in the glorious habiliments of victory, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Having thus triumphed over all hostility and opposition and oppression and persecution the glorious church renewed her mission to all men in the second great invitation of chapter 22:17: “The spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come.



## (4) A textual analysis of chapter twenty.

It has been shown that Rev. 20:4 is altogether too inadequate as a text to sustain the millennial theory—and it is the only text that makes mention of the thousand years. Hence, they have no text. No apostle in any epistle has ever mentioned such a period of time, nor such a dispensation, nor such a millennial age or hope. It must not therefore belong to apostolic doctrine, or to the Christian's hope and duty. Revelation 20 was but the climax of an imagery that began with the scene of defeat in chapter 6:9 and ends in a scene of victory in chapter 20:4. The comparison of chapters *six* and *twenty* reveals the application of the symbols intervening. A running analysis of the final chapters will display the success of the cause of the martyrs and the glory of the victorious church.

1. The angel coming down out of heaven. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit"—20:1-2.

The *angel* was Christ as a messenger of the gospel. The *key to the abyss* held by the evil angel in chapter 9:1 had been taken by Christ, signifying his power over death and hades, as stated in chapter 1:18. The *chain* represented the very purpose of the gospel to prevent the devil from deceiving men. *Bound*—not permitted to deceive—signified the triumph of the truth over error. *A thousand years*—as in all other places where the phrase was mentioned—denoted completeness. Here it had reference to the complete success of the cause over persecutions, and had no reference to a cycle of time. The triumph of Christ over Satan had been fully set forth in Matt. 12:29 and Luke 11:21 in the parable of the strong man's house; "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoils." So Jesus did in overcoming Satan and spoiling his goods and bringing to nought his power. So

says Paul both in Col. 2:15 and Heb. 2:14, as previously shown in this series.

2. Satan cast into the abyss. "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."—20:3.

In the vision Satan returned from his prowling to his diabolical abode in ignominious and complete defeat. His abysmal abode was *shut* by the angel with *the key to the bottomless pit* that he held; which angel also *set a seal upon him*, as an authoritative act; such as the seal of state stamped on the documents signed by officials of government. The purpose of this satanic imprisonment was *that he should deceive the nations no more*—that is, in the idolatry of Caesar-worship, a repetition of the previous symbols of the mark and image of the beast in the heathen emperor-worship.

The next clause *till the thousand years be fulfilled* referred to the complete victory over the imperial persecutors, after which Satan was represented as being unleashed to exert influence, not in the form of persecution, but in the spiritual conflict between heathenism and Christianity—a symbolic representation of the upsurge of heathenism.

3. The souls on the thrones. "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 words of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years"—20:4.

These souls were not bodies and were not embodied. They were souls. And a resurrection was not necessary for souls to live. These souls *lived*—they did not *begin* to live. They *lived*. These souls were under the altar in *chapter six*; they were on thrones in *chapter twenty*. In the first scene a cause had suffered in defeat; in the second, a cause has been crowned with victory. They lived and reigned—taking the souls out from under the altar and elevating them to thrones is referred to as a resurrection; the resur-

rection of a *cause*. They lived in the cause for which they died. They reigned in the persons of their successors, and like characters of like spirit. As John came in the spirit and power of Elijah; as the spirit of Huss lived after his martyrdom; a cause survives the death of its advocates and they live in the spirit of its torchbearers.

*Judgment was given unto them*—that is, the avenging for which the souls under the altar had pleaded was now received. In chapter 6:10 John *heard* the martyrs crying for judgment: “How long, O Lord, holy and true dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Meaning their persecutors. In chapter 20:4 John *saw* them receiving the judgment for which they had called.

*Lived and reigned*—if “reigned” is limited by a literal thousand years, “lived” is also thus limited. So if the reigning ends with the thousand years, the living ends with a thousand years, which ending would upset all the glory of a millennium.

*Thrones*—not literal and earthly, but the exalted state of those who had overcome their persecutions.

*Beheaded*—John saw the “souls” of the beheaded; they did not live in an earthly state. If literal, only those who are literally beheaded could enter the millennium. If figurative, there is no millennium, which is the fact of the matter.

*With Christ*—the text says nothing of the reign of Christ, but specifies a reign of the martyred saints *with* Christ. Reigning with Christ is a state. In I Cor. 4:8, Paul rebuked the Corinthians because they “reigned as kings” in wealth and worldliness; and he wished that they reigned in righteousness with the apostles. In Rom. 5:17, Paul referred to the time under the law when death reigned, but under grace the righteous *reign in life* by Jesus Christ. So these martyred saints *reigned with Christ* in a state of complete victory over death and in felicity of the beatitude *blessed* of verse six.

*Thousand years*—the vision of victory, complete victory. It stood for infinity; it was not a cycle of time nor a period of time, and had no reference to time. God remembers his covenant to a thousand generations, and one day with the Lord is as a thousand years—that is, God’s memory of his

covenant is infinite; and in God's infinite world days and years are not reckoned. The term denoted completeness, perfection, infinity. Their victory was complete, their triumph full, and their reign infinite.

The fundamental principle of exegesis forbids that the thousand years be interpreted literally here, and the word year symbolically in all the book elsewhere. So, if it is literal, the reign of Christ was for one thousand years only, not one day more or less. And, if literal, since both verbs "lived" and "reigned" are modified by the thousand years, when they shall cease to reign, they shall cease to live also. Furthermore, if literal, only the beheaded lived and reigned. And, finally, the third personal pronoun, *they* cannot be changed to the first personal *we*; and the verbs of past tense *lived and reigned* cannot be changed to verbs of future tense *shall live and reign*. The conclusion is that there are too many difficulties in the way of the literal application.

4. The rest of the dead. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection"—20:5.

*The rest of the dead lived not*—since the only ones who are said to have lived were the souls of the slain martyrs, and the rest of the dead lived not, but judgment was given to them—whom did they judge, and how? And if "lived" means that they were given literal bodies, then when the rest of the dead "lived not" until the thousand years was finished, it meant that the rest of the dead would be given literal bodies at the end of the thousand years. That consequence forces the resurrection of the wicked too early; before the little season; and before the time for the resurrection and the judgment in the millennial order of things. So their theory bogs down again.

The rest of the dead here simply referred to the persecutors whose oppressions had been overcome, just as Isa. 26:13-14 referred to the wicked lords who had dominion over Israel as being dead and should not live, deceased and should not rise.

The statement *until the thousand years were finished* did not denote that the figuratively deceased persecutors would be revived afterward. The preposition *until* denotes

end or termination, for which there are numerous exemplifications. In Heb. 9:10 the "carnal ordinances" of the Mosaic order were "imposed on them until the time of reformation"—but this does not mean that after the present gospel dispensation the ordinances of Judaism will be imposed again.

In I Sam. 15:35, after Saul's disobedience in the expedition against the Amalekites, it is said that "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death." This could not mean that Samuel continued to visit Saul after his death. The use of *until* expressed end or termination.

In Luke 16:16, Jesus said, "the law and the prophets were *until* John"—that is, until John's order ended, but the Lord did not imply that "the law and the prophets" would be re-inaugurated afterward.

In Gal. 3:19, the apostle said the law of Moses "was added because of transgression till (until) the seed should come," but the statement assuredly has no implication that the Mosaic law will be reconstituted after the dispensation of Christ.

In Luke 21:24, in foretelling the fall of Jerusalem, the Lord said, "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." On the premises of these passages the Lord's statement in Luke 21:24, means that the old Jerusalem was trodden down permanently—the end of the apostate harlot Jerusalem.

In the light of these examples it is patent that the statement of *verse five*, "the rest of the dead lived not *until* the thousand years were finished," did not imply that the figuratively dead persecutors would come to life afterward. The symbolic statement declared the end of the imperial persecutors of the church, just as Isa. 26:13-14 meant the end of the dominion of the wicked lords over Israel after deliverance from the Babylonian exile. The imagery was parallel, and the language was figurative in both passages.

*This is the first resurrection*—just as Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Babylon was referred to in Ezekiel 37 as a resurrection out of their graves; and the broken dominion of the lords was a resurrection from oppression, of Isa. 26; so overcoming these persecutions, triumphing

over death and martyrdom, in a victorious cause of Christ, was called a resurrection in Revelation 20. The visional procedure of taking the *souls* of the martyrs out from under the altar in chapter 6, and elevating them to thrones in chapter 20, was symbolized as a resurrection; as in Ezekiel 37:11-14 the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity was a symbolic resurrection. In the symbolic picture of Rev. 20:5, the martyrs of the altar in *chapter six* were raised to the thrones of *chapter twenty*, and were pictured as living and reigning with Christ. It was the resurrection of the cause for which they died. The fact that they had to be told that it was a resurrection is proof that it was used in an unusual sense of the word; it was a figurative, metaphorical use, not a physical employment of the word.

The "first resurrection" was therefore spiritual—the resurrection of the cause for they had passed through tribulation and for which the martyrs died.

The passage in Revelation 20 described no period of blessing to be enjoyed at the close of this dispensation. It will not bear the literal construction and the theorists themselves will not accept the conclusions and consequences of it. But as a practical lesson to us, the derived application is this: It is the portion of every true believer in any age who shares the life of the risen Lord through obedience to his commands.

5. Part in the first resurrection. "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"—20:6.

There is an axiom which decrees that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. In Rev. 2:11 it is said that overcoming the persecutions exempted them from the second death. But in Rev. 20:6 it is said that part in the first resurrection exempted them from the second death. Things equal to the same things being equal to each other—part in the first resurrection referred to overcoming the persecutions and entering into the triumph of that victory. Again, it is the same kind of a resurrection prophesied in Isaiah 26 and Ezekiel 37.

*On such the second death hath no power*—the implication of the context is that the *first death* was the martyrdom of the saints as represented by the *souls of them that were slain* under the altar in chapter 6:9. Receiving the guerdon of martyrdom for their overcoming faith, promised by their Lord in chapter 2:10-11, these martyred saints had exemption from the judgment of them that had received *the mark of the beast* in submission to the imperial edict commanding the worship of the Caesar-image. They were in a state of special dispensation, not amenable to judgment. This in contrast with those who had “worshipped the beast” and “his image” and who had received “his mark,” and in consequence shared the same retribution—the oblivion of eternal banishment.

*Priests of God and of Christ*—the expressions of “priests of God and Christ” and “reign with” in this imagery were used synonymously, as in chapter 1:6 and 5:10; and compares with the phrase “kingdom of Christ and God” in Eph. 5:5, in which all Christians reign with Christ. It symbolized the perpetual performance of heavenly functions in the presence of God and Christ in “the kingdom of Christ and God.” In this heavenly state they *shall reign with him a thousand years*—that is, in complete victory and infinite reward, removed from transitory time and terrestrial place. The use of *thousand years* here is further proof that it had no reference or application to a literal cycle of years.

*They shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.* This, of course, referred to the *souls who lived and reigned*; and here *shall reign with him* referred to the continuity of that reign which had begun in the expression “lived and reigned” of *verse four*. It had reference to the same *souls* and the same *reign* and simply denoted its continuation.

6. The loosing of Satan. “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison”—20:7.

After the catastrophic fall of Judaism, and the victory of the saints over the imperial persecutors, there was a renewed struggle of the church with heathenism, a spiritual conflict symbolized by Satan being *loosed out of his prison*. With Judaism removed from the path of the church, and the

cessation of persecution by the imperial rulers, the way was open for the expansion of Christianity, as foretold by Jesus in Matt. 24:31, and envisioned by John in Rev. 11:15. But it was not without opposition—the remaining enemy was *heathenism*. Satan's theatre of activity in this struggle was not persecution, but spiritual and doctrinal: *And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth—20:8.*

That declaration was in opposition to the angel—messengers of the gospel—of Matt. 24:31, gathering his elect “from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” This part of the vision was descriptive of the battle with heathenism, hence the reference to *Gog and Magog* (a combination of one name), the mythical ruler of heathendom, and which title was so used in similar symbolic reference, by the prophet in chapter 38:1-23, prophesying the threat of heathenism to Israel from *Gog and Magog*. As the beast was symbolic of the Roman empire, personified in the persecuting emperors, so was the *Gog and Magog* personification symbolic of the spiritual forces of heathenism launched against the church in the “battle” of *verse eight*, in which the heathen forces of *Gog and Magog* were represented to be in number *as the sand of the sea*, which symbolized the proportions of the conflict and its challenge to the church; and *verse nine* stated that they *compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city*. The reference to the “beloved city” here could not mean Jerusalem—the apostate harlot Jerusalem was no longer “beloved,” and was no more. This beloved city was the church, the New Jerusalem, which was *compassed about* with heathenism, in the midst of its idolatries, surrounded by all of its antagonism to the church.

The first chapter of Romans, and the Corinthian, Ephesian, and Colossian epistles confirm this great danger to the church. It was concerning this threat of heathen influence that Paul specifically exhorted the Corinthian church in II Cor. 6:14-18. The description of *verse nine* that the legions of the heathen ruler *went upon the breath of the earth* in the forays of his satanic forces against the church emphasizes the extent of the opposition to Christianity, and of its



threat to the church. But as in the finale of the imperial persecutions, the church prevailed against heathenism, *and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.* This was the symbol of the consuming power of the word of God in exposing the error and evil of heathen idolatry. The apostle declared in II Cor. 4:2-4 that the light of the gospel of Christ dispelled the darkness of "the god of this world." Neither the imperial beast nor the heathen Magog could withstand the power of God. It was in reference to these same things that Paul said in Rom. 16:20: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

The defeat of the emperor-worship was described in *verse ten* with metaphors of torment and endless punishment. The three great enemies of the church had been vanquished. The devil who had employed the forces of heathenism to deceive the people and destroy the church, together with the beast and false prophet of chapter 19:20, was cast into the region of oblivion and eternal torment. The meaning of the vision, simply stated, is that the combined effort of the imperial persecutors and of the heathen powers to stop the advance of the church resulted in colossal failure. There is no rule of exegesis or of interpretation that could warrant a literal application of the wide sweep of this symbolic language. It was the figurative description of the end and doom of the rulers who oppressed the church of Christ; and it signified that they should nevermore exist to humiliate the Lord's church, the Lamb's Bride.

#### (5) The tribunal of the great white throne.

The progress of the apocalypse from the opening vision of chapter *four* surrounded Christ, the Rider and Conqueror; and the church, his Bride; in conflict with multiple opposing powers. But in the scene of *verses eleven to fifteen* the visions turned to the judgment throne of God, as "the dead both small and great stand before God."

The picture in these verses was but the continuation of the contrast between the causes of righteousness and wickedness, truth and error, Christianity and heathenism; and their standing respectively before the great throne of divine judgment. The issues had been joined in the fierce conflict

between the church on one hand, and all the forces of Judaism, Romanism and paganism on the other. Now the participants stood before the bar of divine decision, where the issues were settled. The cause of righteousness was acquitted, and the cause of wickedness was convicted, and forever condemned.

A continuation of the textual analysis will add "precept upon precept" that the apocalypse was limited to the period of the struggle and triumph of the church with opposing powers in the first century of its existence.

1. The great white throne. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them"—20:11.

This visional tribunal was the bar of divine justice to be meted to the criminals of war against Christ and the church. The description of the *great white throne* adds awe to the vision, as it also symbolized the character of pure and unmingled justice from the magnificent seat of judgment dispensed by the righteous Judge of the small and great. The Psalmist put it to verse in Psalms 84:14: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." From before the face of God *the earth and the heaven fled away: and there was found no place for them*. This was not flight from one locality to another—the phrase *fled away* indicated complete disappearance. The *earth*, as in other visions, referred to the inhabitants of the land of Palestine; and *the heaven* signified the authorities and governments.

After complete defeat there was no place for their activities of persecution and opposition, and they disappeared from their visional positions before the face of the great God of judgment.

2. The dead small and great. "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."—20:12.

These dead were the class of *verse five*, and of chapter

19:18. They were the “rest of the dead,” the persecutors of the church, *small and great*—from the lowest to the highest officials of the imperial beast—all of them together stood before the tribunal of retribution. Comparison again with Isaiah’s vision of the demise of the wicked lords who had exercised evil dominion over Israel in Isa. 26:13-14 will lend force to this application of the judgment throne vision. These dead were held in contrast with the blessed of *verse six*, and there was no blessing for any of these dead, small and great—they stood before the throne of the great God, as culprits called to account for their crimes. When *the books were opened* that contained the record of their works they were judged accordingly. In the same symbolism, the beasts of Daniel’s vision, chapter 7:10, were judged by the books which were opened. These books symbolized the record of evil deeds, a book of remembrance. But the reference to *another book . . . which is the book of life* symbolized the registry of the approved, *which are written in heaven*. The names of these dead included in *the rest of the dead* were not in it. The distinction was made between *the books*, and *the book of life*. The names of *the dead, small and great*, referred to the judgment of the evil persecutors and opposers of the church; they were *judged out of those things which were written in the books*—not the *book*. These things were the record of their own evil works.

The whole vision, of course, was figurative, and must be applied in the sense of the visions which represented the deadly struggle of the church with the persecuting powers.

3. The sea gave up the dead which were in it. “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”—20:13.

The symbolism continued, the reference was not to the literal sea nor to physical death. Although the principles may be applied generally, the language belongs visionally to this apocalypse, and has direct reference to the judgment of the persecuting rulers and their subjects. The use of the word *sea* applied to the heathen society, consistent with the employment of the symbol elsewhere in the apocalypse; as

mentioned in the classification of symbols in the first chapter. There was no reference to the bodily resurrection of the dead at the general judgment. This surrender by the *sea* of its dead was as figurative as the *first resurrection* of verse six. The realm of *death and hell* (hades) in like figure were also said to *deliver up the dead which were in them*. The words *death* and *hades* were used as a synecdoche—a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole; the genus for the species, the name of the substance for the thing. So *death and hades* were used here for the subjects of the diabolical and infernal powers.

In the same symbolism that the *first resurrection* of *verse six* was described as a resurrection to a state of victory—the resurrection of a cause; the “rest of the dead” were envisioned in a resurrection of retribution—of judgment on the evil rulers and their wicked subjects who had persecuted the cause of the Lamb of God.

4. Death and hades cast into the lake of fire. “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death”—20:14.

These were the figurative representatives of the realms of opposition to the cause of the saints, and they were consigned to the same figurative oblivion with the beast. The symbolism meant that the period of martyrdom had ended, and there was surcease from persecution.

This judgment on the evil instigators of the persecutions and martyrdom of the saints of God and Christ was specifically named *the second death*, which again was as visional and metaphorical as “the first resurrection.” It denoted in symbolic language the destruction of the evil forces which had moved against the church to destroy it.

5. The names not written in the book of life. “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”—20:15.

The *book of life* was the registry of the approved of God. The names not found in it were not a part of God’s called and chosen people—they belonged to the society opposed to the church.

The same reference in chapter 13:8 mentioned the names not written in the book of life “from the foundation of the

earth," which affirms the great truth that in all nations and ages the only people who belong to God in the true sense of *the people of God* were and are the people who have lived and now live in obedience to His divine will.

Let it be impressed on the minds of the readers of Revelation, that these visions of resurrection; of second death and judgment; were all extraordinary and of special character. They were not intended for future and general application. They belonged to the apocalypse, and the apocalypse belonged to that period. The depiction of the *first resurrection* and the *second death* were not meant for expositions of the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead and the future eternal punishment of the wicked, abundantly taught elsewhere in numerous scriptures. Though the imagery has basis in these fundamental doctrinal truths, the visions of Revelation were limited in application to the pageantry of apocalyptic description of the fortunes of the early church and the divine judgments on its enemies.

#### XIV

#### THE DISCLOSURE OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH AND THE DESCENT OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

#### (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. 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.

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 idolaters, 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. 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, an 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. 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, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; 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. 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."

(1) A preliminary vision of the new heaven and earth and of the new Jerusalem and the Tabernacle—21:1-7.

Here the apocalypse had reached a natural climax, a fitting close of all that had been envisioned, by the description of the nature and blessedness of the new state. The enemies of Christ and his church had been judged; the dragon-beast who was Satan personified had been overthrown. The last and highest object of the apocalypse in the culmination of the visions was about to be reached in the fulfillment of the promise made to the seven churches at the beginning by Jesus Christ himself. The glory of God had been exalted over the heathen idols and the triumph of Christianity over heathen philosophy had been demonstrated. The wicked minions of the heathen world had been cast into the lake of oblivion, to their rightful diabolical abode—all of this, as a prelude to the description of the new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem.

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—21:1.* The new conditions of the earth and of the sea did not signify abolition of the old order of governments, nor the formation of new secular and political powers. The *earth* throughout the apocalypse referred to the place of the nations, with particular reference to Pales-

tine; and the placid or tossed *sea* referred to the state of society; and the word *heaven* denoted the existing authorities of government. The *new* heaven and earth, and the trouble sea, having passed away and represented as being *no more*, indicated the changed conditions within the existing governments and society to make them favorable for the prosperity of the cause of Christ and his church throughout the empire. The old system of Judaism had been removed and the opposition of heathenism had been overcome; and the vision represented new conditions to surround the church in the changed world.

The word *new* has various connotations. It may refer to that which has never been used; or to a thing of late date and recent origin; or to something novel and strange; or simply to something else, *another* possession, relation or state. In this context the evident meaning of the *new earth* was that the surroundings were prepared and made favorable for the expansion of the kingdom of Christ, made possible by the removal of Judaism, the Jewish theocracy and the Jewish state. The literal Jerusalem was no more. The armies of Nero and Vespasian had laid waste the old Jerusalem and Judea; and on the rocks of the Aegean sea John envisioned the forward march of the church, the expansion of the kingdom of Christ, and the spread of the gospel to "the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

This phrase, *new heaven and new earth*, was not new in scripture terminology. The Old Testament prophets referred to Israel's return from Babylon and their restoration to their own land of Judea as to them a "new heaven and new earth." (Isa. 65:17—66:22; Ezek. 11:19—36:26-36). To the Corinthians the apostle Paul described the new state in Christ as *the old things having passed away*—referring to the new spiritual relation to Christ in the new covenant versus the old fleshly Israelism of the old covenant. (II Cor. 5:17) To the scattered Jerusalem church the apostle Peter adapted that phrase in his exhortation to look for the heavenly reward in the eternal world. (2 Pet. 3:13) In the apocalypse the apostle John applied the same phrase to the emergence of the church from the tribulation period.



The figurative use of the *sea* has a natural connection. The creator has secured and fortified the natural world by the divisions of the earth, with the interposition of vast expanses of water as barriers to conquest. This barrier in society was figuratively removed for the conquest of Christ through the expansion of the gospel—there would no longer exist separating barriers between the people of the earth. Christianity without the restraint of heathen government would become universal, as the prophet declared: “for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as waters cover the sea.” It is significant that this prophecy of Isaiah was uttered in the context of the eleventh chapter dealing with the prevalence of the gospel under the rule and reign of Christ; and it was quoted by Paul in his epistle to the Romans (chapter 15:12) as being fulfilled in that time.

The heavenly city, new Jerusalem, symbolic of the victorious church was visualized as having been withdrawn from the scene of the removal and destruction of the old Jerusalem; but now that the old order had passed away with the disappearance of its city and sanctuary; the church having survived annihilation, the new Jerusalem was seen as descending from heaven. The *new earth* represented the renovation of old conditions; and the vision that thereafter there should be *no more sea* meant no more such sea as that from which the beast had emerged. The vision meant that a new state had been wrought by the truth, by the word of the Conqueror whose *name* was *The Word*, by which sword all foes had been vanquished; and there was no more the tossed and troubled sea of tribulation.

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—21:2.* The old Jerusalem, the harlot and the Babylon of Revelation had fallen—the Jerusalem of Judaism. Here the Jerusalem of Gal. 4:26 and Heb. 12:22 were envisioned by the Seer as the bride of Christ. It was a vision of the fall of the old and the triumph of the new. The fact that this new Jerusalem was seen coming down *from God out of heaven* is the proof that it was not in reference to or descriptive of the eternal home; but rather that God was envisioned as presenting to the new earth what he had

preserved from the tribulation of the old, "for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

In the period of persecution the vision was of the militant church passing through tribulation; but that scene was completed and here the vision was of the triumphant church coming out of tribulation into the victory of the cause of her Christ, the Conqueror of her enemies. The new Jerusalem was described as the beautified Woman, who had once fled into the wilderness as a persecuted church, but was now seen coming from God her Preserver wondrously clothed, resplendently attired, richly adorned, gloriously displayed—triumphantly descending out of heaven. The persecuted Woman had fled to "the place prepared of God" for her refuge, protection and preservation, but was here envisioned as having returned and in the ultimate descriptive phrases of victory and triumph she was presented to "the new heaven and the new earth" as the glorious Bride of the Lamb—the picture of the Conquering Christ and his Victorious Church.

The new dwelling place for the new Jerusalem had been renovated and purged from all heathen domination. The old Jerusalem with its old system of worship had been typical of the city of God; but its sanctuary was cleansed and it was to be no longer earthly, but heavenly; no longer temporal but spiritual. (Heb. 7:5; 9:23; 12:22) The new Jerusalem on a spiritually or figuratively renovated earth was seen as the heavenly community of the righteous for all nations of men. It was the vision of the pure church Bride descending from the high realm of holiness in contrast with the fallen harlot city.

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—21:3.* This great voice was the voice of God and Christ in unison, united with the throng of chapter 19:1, and coming from one throne. Here the fundamental truth that the Father and the Son are *one* found its expression. The kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God are one kingdom (Eph. 5:5); the throne of God and the throne of Christ are one throne (Heb. 1:8);

the church of God and the church of Christ are one church (Acts 20:28) ; and the great voice from the throne was the voice of God and the voice of Christ in one united sound.

The great voice announced that *the tabernacle of God is with men*. The use of the word tabernacle here was not ecclesiastical as of old. The word meant *presence*. This tabernacle of God was in contrast with the Jewish tent in the wilderness which was “a shadow of heavenly things.” (Heb. 8:1-4) It was here used to signify God’s presence with men and that he would dwell in them through his church in the world. To take the church out of the world would be to take God out of it. The tent of the wilderness signified the presence of God with Israel and through it he dwelt in them. (Ex. 40:34-38) The church is the new tabernacle for his habitation (Eph. 2:22), and through it God dwells in men and *they shall be his people*—in contrast with the heathen gods—through their conversion by the truth from the darkness of heathenism to the light of Christianity. (Acts 26:16-18) The words of the voice, *he will dwell with them*, used the third personal pronoun *he* in the reference to God, which indicates that another was the speaker, and it represented the entire heavenly throng as in (chapter 19:1) joining in the proclamation—the voice “of much people in heaven,” envisioned as descending to their new inheritance of the new heaven and the new earth. The old order of Judaism had disappeared; the way for the new Jerusalem had been cleared of the greatest obstacle in its path—Judaism; and the vision presented the new throng of citizens floating down from above with united voices bearing the testimony that the new heaven and the earth would be the dwelling place of God with men in the new Jerusalem, the church.

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—21:4.* This passage was the fulfillment of the promise in chapter 7:14-17 which was vouchsafed by Christ himself that the faithful through tribulation would become recipients of the blessings signified in the symbolic phrases of these two texts. The same figures

of speech are employed by Isaiah in the descriptions of the blessings that should come upon Israel when freed from exile and returned to their land. It could not reasonably be argued that the metaphors of no more *weeping* and *crying* in Isa. 65:19 referred to heaven. Israel had been weeping with their harps hanging on the willows in Babylon; but upon return to their land the weeping and tears of exile would be wiped away. It was the same metaphorical representation in Rev. 7:17 and 22:4—*no more death* referred to the martyrdom of the saints as in chapter 2:10; *neither sorrow nor crying* referred to the sorrows of persecution; and neither *any more pain* was just another phrase for no more tribulation. The rider of the *red horse* of death had been conquered by the Rider of the *white horse* of deliverance from the scenes of tribulation, and these descriptions were in the continuity of the vision.

The mourning of Israel in exile was pictured as having been ended in the return to their own land in several references in the prophecies of Isaiah, examples of which are in chapters 35:10; 51:11 and 65:19. Here it was declared by the prophet that after the return from exile their *sorrow and mourning* should then *flee away*. The same application must be made of the *death* (martyrdom) and the *sorrow, crying* and *pain* (of the tribulation) in the continuing vision of Revelation which referred to the exclusion from their new heaven and new earth the experiences of the tribulation period. The threefold army and horsemen of the woes had been banished, defeated by the conquering Rider of the white horse; and in the same metaphors employed by the prophets to represent Israel's deliverance from exile, the Seer of Revelation adapted that imagery to signify the deliverance of the spiritual Israel, the church, from the period of tribulation. It falls into the complete harmony with the Lord's discourse in Matthew 24 and with all of the visions of Revelation as a whole.

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 faithful and true.*—21:5. He who sat on the throne gave this command which the angel communicated to John, and in a parenthetical phrase John referred to the original

command given to him by Christ in chapter 1:19. The Seer was ready to do what he had been commanded to do at the beginning; and they were here attested to be faithful and true words; it was in the character of swearing to the truthfulness of what John was about to write, a form of an oath in affirmation of veracity. It was before the visions were received that the voice of chapter 1 had prompted John to record the things which would be heard and seen. It was the same voice which had first commanded him to *write* which now was heard to say: *Behold, I make all things new*. This same expression has been used to distinguish spiritual Israel from fleshly Israel (II Cor. 5:17); and that phrase was employed here in distinction of the new heaven and new earth from the old system of Judaism. With the fall of the old Jerusalem, the destruction of its theocracy, the termination of the Jewish state, and the removal of the last vestige of Judaism, a new order would prevail under new surroundings.

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—21:6.* With the proclamation *it is done* the vision proper concerning the church in tribulation had ended, and the Revelation had ended, and the Revelation was ready to assume the new aspect of the church in the glory of victory rather than in the defeat of persecution. God and Christ are the *Alpha* and *Omega* because they are the beginning and the end in creation and in salvation, and here in the promises made to the churches, in faithfulness to finish what had begun. It meant that the vision was completed and the things envisioned would be fulfilled. When God said in the beginning, Let there be light—there was light; and of everything that God said in creation, *it was done*. The accomplishment of the things envisioned in the apocalypse rested upon the eternal being of God and Christ whose “word is true from the beginning and whose righteous judgments endureth forever” (Psa. 119:160); and the voice which John heard represented it all as having been done—God’s word was sure.

The inducement offered to all to drink from the fountain

of the water of life freely was the gospel invitation, to all the thirsty people under the blight of heathenism in the land, to come to the fountain of the living waters Christianity—there was unrestrained liberty to preach salvation and unhindered access to its blessings to all men. It was a restatement and a reproclamation of the Saviour's precious invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me . . . for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30) The word yoke signified government, and the Lord's words were chosen for the comparison of his righteous rule in the hearts of men with the tyrannical rule of the Caesars; and of his power to save men from sin with the dark and despairing hopelessness of heathenism. This vision of the new Jerusalem in the new world of liberation from the evil powers was the offer of gospel blessings to the whole world.

7. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son—21:7.* The expression "he that overcometh" was employed here the first time since the repeated use of the phrase in the letters to the seven churches, which is a plain indication that the reference was to that period and to the events that belonged to it. The term *inherit* imports the thought of the privileges of citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem; and to inherit *all things* was inclusive of that which had been described in preceding verses and the implied in the following words: *And I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* Here was an allusion to the promises of Samuel to David (II Sam. 7:14), concerning the Davidic throne, which were quoted by Paul (Heb. 1:5) as having been fulfilled in Christ. The old Davidic order of Judaism had ended, and this promise had a new significance; the old tabernacle of David that had fallen down (Acts 15:13-17) was rebuilt in the church which it had typified, and all of the spiritual blessings included in "the sure mercies of David" (Acts 13:33-34) were available in the new tabernacle. Therefore, all who had "overcome" the tribulations were entering anew into all of the promises of the New Jerusalem, theretofore hindered by the rival opposition of Judaism; but that

hindrance having been removed, the full and free blessings flowing from “the fountain of the water of life” (verse 6) would be the unmingled spiritual inheritance of the overcomers.

(2) The characters cast into the brimstone lake—21:8.

*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and the whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death—verse 8.* Here was the pronouncement of doom on all classes of the persecutors and all parties and accomplices to the persecutions, implying also a warning to any among the overcomers against falling into any of this catalog of things condemned.

1. The *fearful* were those who shrank from the conflict who were put here in contrast with the overcomers.

2. The *unbelievers* were not those who were apostates from Christ, but the dwellers of the earth (Palestine) in the heathen world hostile to Christ; and who in their perverse refusal to accept Christianity remained under condemnation.

3. The *abominable* were the characters who practiced the defilements of the heathen world and the harlot woman (17:4).

4. The *murderers* were the ones who had killed the prophets and had slain the saints (Matt. 23:31-36; Acts 7:52); and who were guilty of the blood of the martyrs who were in this vision avenged.

5. The *fornicators* (whoremongers) were figurative of all who were affiliated with the practices of the harlot woman which had been described.

6. The *sorcerers* and *idolaters* were terms figurative of heathen practices and worship.

7. The phrase *all liars* included all of the deceivers and means of deception which influenced the people of the earth (Palestine) to worship the Caesar-image, or to yield to

any form of heathen philosophy that would prevent the acceptance of Christ.

It is said that all of these classes of promoters of evil practices would be cast into the brimstone lake. This lake which burneth with *fire and brimstone* signified the complete destruction of Christ and his church. (See comments on chapter 19:20; 20:10) This would be the *part*, or the portion, of all the unbelievers.

The explanations here and in chapter 19:20 and chapter 20:10 do not deny, destroy or modify the resurrection and judgment of the wicked at the second coming of Christ, nor of the eternal punishment of the wicked, which doctrines are clearly taught in numerous portions of the scriptures of both the old and the new testaments. The purpose of the comments here is merely to place these apocalyptic passages in proper contextual perspective and relation to the symbolism of the *book Of Revelation* and its message. In this context the *second death* was a figurative description of the punishment of the persecutors in contrast with the deaths of the martyrs of the first resurrection. All these would have part in this second death in suffering the same destruction. The ones who had *part* in it came to the same end as the persecuting beast—a figurative description of complete destruction and annihilation of all persecuting powers opposed to the church whose opposition was crushed.

(3) The description of the massive dimensions of the great city, the holy new Jerusalem—21:9-17.

The original designation for Jerusalem was the name Salem, mentioned Psa. 76:2, and it meant the possession of peace, or the inheritance of peace. It was the most important city of biblical history, and the most sacred and the most desecrated of the whole world. The Psalmist of Israel sang its praises; but Christ the Saviour wept tears of sorrow over its apostasies, unfaithfulness and approaching desolation. (Matt. 23:37-38)

The Jerusalem of the time of Christ and the apostles and people of the New Testament lies buried beneath the ruins of the succeeding centuries; and the Jerusalem



which was the city of David is buried far deeper below the surface of modern Jerusalem. In the fifteen centuries of its existence from its first appearance in Old Testament history until its destruction in A. D. 70 it had been besieged some fifteen or twenty times, was twice razed and burned, and twice its walls were crumbled by enemy attacks. There is not the slightest feature remaining today of its ancient glory.

Under Solomon the city of David attained its highest fame and greatest grandeur, as the result of the wise king's accomplishments of the building of the magnificent temple and royal palace, and the extension and strengthening of its massive walls. With a vast army of skilled craftsmen the enormous workmanship that entered into its erection was completed, and the venerated temple with its splendid sanctuary was dedicated within seven and one-half years. This was in wide contrast with the gradual work on Herod's temple, standing in the time of Christ, which required "forty and six years" to complete. (Jno. 2:20) It was in king Solomon's reign, due to these accomplishments, that Jerusalem became the one central place of all the world for the true worship of God. It was the Mecca of the Jews, the holy city, and whether near or far, at home or in foreign land, the devoted Jew prayed with his face toward Jerusalem.

Captured by the Roman Pompey in B. C. 63, the land of the Jews was again subjugated and became a province of the Caesars. Approximately twenty years later, B. C. 40, the city fell to the Parthians, under Antigonus; but only one year later Herod the Great laid siege to the city, and supported by the Roman army the citadel and the temple were recaptured by storm; and Herod was afterward made king of Judea by the Romans. He at once improved and beautified the city, and initiated the enlargement and refurbishing of the temple without and within, requiring the period of forty-six years as mentioned in the gospel record of John. Under the rule of Herod the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple approximated their ancient magnificence.

The Jerusalem of the New Testament times stood with

Correction of Error: On page 434, line 6 from top of the page reads: "destruction of Christ and his church." This line should read: *destruction of the heathen powers that had persecuted Christ and his church.*

all the imposing grandeur and strength to which it had been brought by Herod through nearly a half-century of workmanship, with all of its multiple walls and structures. It was after the death of Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, that the province of Judea was again ruled by oppressive provincial Roman procurators, and Jerusalem became the ground for the scenes of discontent, violent insurrections and political rebellion. It is no wonder that her apostasies and abominations should become the object of the Patmos visions to signify the Harlot; and it is not strange that the once holy city should be the type of the New Jerusalem, the Bride and church of Christ the Lamb.

With this excursion we return to the apocalyptic description of the Great City, the Holy New Jerusalem, which begins with verse nine of chapter twenty-one.

This vision of the Holy City was in contrast with the vision of *Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth* of chapter seventeen. There one of the angels of judgment showed John the Harlot City (the old Jerusalem) which had become the mother of the abominations of the earth (Palestine) by her many apostasies; as lamented by Jesus Christ himself in the twenty-third and the twenty-fourth chapters of Matthew. In the vision of chapter twenty-one, now under consideration, the same angels showed John the Holy City. They were hitherto the executioners of divine wrath and judgment; but here they were the administrators of divine love and reward. In comparison, the angels in the two chapters (17 and 21) used the same identification in the language describing their functions, but for a different mission. In chapters *seventeen* to *nineteen* these angels were on the mission of pronouncing judgment upon the Harlot Woman; but in chapter *twenty-one* the mission of the same angels was to exhibit the Holy City, the Bride. It was appropriate that the angels pronouncing the doom on the old Jerusalem of Judaism should also announce the blessings of triumph awaiting the New Jerusalem Bride. The chapter is a continuation of the vial-angel visions,

culminating in the glorious success of the church in the heathen world.

1. *Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife*—21:9. This beckoning of the angel is another proof, among the many others in the contexts of these chapters, that the descriptions of the holy city were not visions of heaven the home of the soul, but of the glorious church of Christ, designated the *bride* and the *wife* of the Lamb, redeemed from tribulation, but yet to fulfill her divine mission on the earth.

2. *And he carried me away in the spirit unto a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God*—21:10. The phrase *in the spirit* here is the same expression as that used in chapter 1:10 and it did not refer to the Holy Spirit in either of the passages, but rather indicated the visional rapture in which John was shown these things. It was in the spirit—his own spirit—that he was carried away to the place where these things were unfolded to him in vision. The visional point to which he was carried was *a great and high mountain*. This apocalyptic panorama was a part of the imagery of the exaltation of the Jerusalem Bride. The same metaphorical language was used by Isaiah in a prophetic description of the pre-eminence of the church in its spiritual elevation above the level of all institutions of men. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." (Isa. 2:2) In the same figurative character and language, John was carried in spirit to the mountain. It was not a mere mountain upon which the church was to be established in Isaiah's prophecy, but *in the top of the mountains*; and it is altogether fitting that John should be transported in spirit to *a great and high mountain* to be shown the grandeur and glory of the triumphant church.

From this eminent visional peak John saw the *holy Jerusalem* descending. It was designated the holy Jerusalem in contrast with the harlot Jerusalem. No greater or more impressive attributive title could have been ascribed to the Bride of Christ than that of the Holy City Jerusalem.

In this vision of elevation the entranced Seer saw *that great city descending*—it had not already descended, the events were yet in process, but the end was in sight. It was about to be the culmination of the entire apocalypse. The Holy City was descending *out of heaven from God*—that is, the visional emergence of the Woman from *that place prepared of God* mentioned in chapter 12:6, and compared with Matt. 24:16 in the comments in chapter *twelve* on these two related passages. The holy city, the church, was seen descending *from God*—that is, from the place *prepared of God* where God had protected her and preserved her in that period of tribulation. Upon the lofty mountain height, from a position where the Seer could descry the distant descent of the marvellous City, as if to discover by the eye an object at far focus and observe its approach, this vision of the New Jerusalem was unfolded to the revelator.

3. *Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal*—21:11. The attribute of glory here ascribed to the holy church in descent was an allusion to the cloud of glory that covered and filled the tabernacle at its completion—the *Shekinah*, that divine manifestation through which God's presence was made known. The *light* of the City was like *a jasper stone, clear as crystal*. In chapter 4:3 the One on the throne had this appearance of crystal jasper; so the vision here is that the Holy City represented the resplendent glory of God Himself, as Paul affirmed of the church in Eph. 3:21: "Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end." The force of this descriptive attribute of the Holy City was the ultimate in glory and grandeur. The ancient crystal jasper was pellucid in its transparency and diaphonous in its translucency. As the sun is the luminary of the heavens, the glory of God Himself illumined this descending Holy City, the New Jerusalem church, with the divine effulgence of his presence.

4. *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 Israel. . . . And*

*the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb—21:12-14.* The great wall of this vision was symbolic of security, and represented the protection from all the foes by which the church has been assailed; and which had assured them of the complete victory that was here envisioned. The massive walls with the huge gates were necessary to the ancient cities. Upon the outer wall of ancient Babylon three horse-drawn chariots could drive abreast; in the walls were twenty-five great brass gates; and upon the walls were two hundred fifty gigantic towers for the guard of watchmen. Jerusalem had twelve gates in its wall, with the gateman at each station, and the watchmen in its towers. In this mountain-top vision the wall of the Great City had twelve gates; and at these gates *twelve angels* at guard. It was the symbol of the continued success of the cause of Christ, the security from all past hazards of persecution, and the freedom from the assaults from the dragon-beast as the personification of Satan in the imperial persecutors.

The word *gates* has been rendered *portals*, which in the singular means the *door* of a gate; or in the plural, the *portal* of a city. The numeral *twelve* as applied here, and in Matt. 19:28 to the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles, represented completeness, the whole church, joining the old and the new in type and antitype. The twelve gates and the twelve foundations, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb, were the emblems of God's people as a whole in the old and new testaments. It symbolized the full and complete plan of God envisioned in the perfection of the church as the product of all divine revelation through the prophets of Israel and the apostles of Christ.

The vision further described the City as having three gates on each side—twelve gates. The eye-witness historian, Josephus, described the old Jerusalem as having three gates on four sides (B J 5, 4, 2). The vision taken together with the twelve foundations bearing the tribal and apostolic names represented, as previously explained, the two economies of the old and the new testaments having been completed in the church as the whole people of God, which

fulfilled the purpose of God in the redemption of mankind, brought together in the figure of the *one new man* (Eph. 2:14-16)—the church. The New Jerusalem with its twelve walls and twelve gates and twelve foundations was here envisioned as the embodiment of the divine unity of all revelation. The teaching of the twelve apostles uphold and support the church, which in the vision was so guarded by the twelve angels as to keep it aware of all error and that the forces of the hadean world could never prevail against it.

5. *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof—21:15.* The measuring rod in the hand of the angel was a reed of gold, which was symbolic of the divinity of that which was to be measured—the city was divine. The city had perfect quadrangular dimensions—it was *four-square*. The word “foursquare” was a Greek term used to denote perfection in any form. The immensity of the Holy City was signified by the mathematical figure of *twelve thousand furlongs*, or approximately fifteen hundred cubic miles, expressed in the words of the text: *The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal*. It has been calculated that the measure of the twelve thousand furlongs in English miles computed 1378.97 exact English miles—the figure having been reckoned by a biblical commentator of England. Whether exactly or approximately it was the symbolism, first of the spiritual perfection of the church and, second, of its universality—that it was destined to fill the whole earth. The prophet declared (Isa. 11:9) that the knowledge of God would cover the earth; and Jesus said in the beatitudes (Matt. 5:5) that his disciples would inherit the earth—that is, fill the whole earth with his teaching. That has ever been and shall ever be the mission of his church, and that purpose was symbolized in the descriptions of the New Jerusalem.

The measurement of the wall of the Holy City was said, in verse 17, to be *according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel*. The *stadia* of the angel was “after the manner of a man”—no different from that of a man and within human understanding, though it was *of the angel*. The

angel had used man's standard of measurement, but it was symbolically, not literally, applied. It meant that the *stadia* employed by the angel was on a scale of measurement that was not unknown to man. The literal view of these measurements as being descriptive of the exact plan and size of the New Jerusalem as a city would destroy the sublimity of the apocalyptic picture and pervert the symbolism of the vision. In the comparison of the dimensions of the city and the wall surrounding it, the vision represented that the eminences within the wall of the New Jerusalem were so lofty that its highest summits and pinnacles were as many furlongs above the base of the wall as the length of the wall itself. The vision was symbolical of great and grand magnificence. To the eye of John from the summit ranges, floating down from God, was a view of splendor the magnitude of which was indescribable. But the figurative description, "according to the measure of a man," was not grotesque or disproportioned. God was the architect and builder of the Holy City (Psa. 127:1); which was the manifestation of his divine wisdom, as a building exhibits the skill of its designer (Eph. 3:10, 11, 21); and in it his own glory will be exhibited through time and in eternity "world without end." In the symbolism of the New Jerusalem's dimensions was signified that it is the will of God that the church should include the whole multitude of the saved—its entire aggregation.

(4) The indescribable grandeur and magnificence of the new Jerusalem—21:18-21.

It would be impractical, if not entirely futile and frustrating, to attempt a descriptive application of each precious stone which decorated the Holy City. There is no singular meaning or definition that can be imparted to these jewels of adornment, but altogether the enumeration of all existing precious stones presented a vision so exquisite in the extreme as to exceed all human imagination or contemplation.

The sublime apocalypse portrayed the New Jerusalem as being the church of the firstborn ones (Heb. 12-22-23), the citizens of which have their names inscribed in the

registry of heaven. Its citizenry consisted in a kind of firstfruits of all of God's creatures (Jas. 1:18)—they are his choice creation. Its structure was itself constructed of *pure gold*; its streetway, or passage system, was the same as of the city—of solid gold, and transparent. The expression *pure gold* means unalloyed, without the comparative carats in weight or measure or degree of content; but in purity no mixture or alloy. The eye of man has discovered and discerned pure gold, but no man has ever seen *transparent* gold, a description that adds visional resplendence to the delineations.

The portals of the City were composed of pure pearls, each gate consisting of one solid pearl; and its twelve foundations were garnished with twelve rare jewels of glistening beauty, which in the order from one to twelve were: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, an emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth and an amethyst. With vast clusters of edifices within the high wall the super-structure of the City was embellished by whatever materials were known to man to be the most estimable and resplendent of earth's treasures—and these all were adapted to enhance the glorious majesty of the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's Bride—the church of Christ.

(5) The constituent spiritual characteristics of the glorious new Jerusalem—21:22-27.

According to Webster the word *constituent* is indicative of elements that form, or compose, or make up an existing thing; and *characteristic* is defined as distinctive, or serving to constitute the character of anything. On the high mountain outlook the vision not only exhibited to John the outward glories of the Holy City but displayed also the inward spiritual peculiarities of the City of the Lamb. In it there was *no temple* (verse 22), for there was no *veil* between God and the Redeemed, as in the temple that had been taken away (Matt. 27:51); and because the church itself is the temple of God. (Eph. 2:21; Rev. 7:15) The old temple had been a type of the new, and there was no place in the vision for a symbol of that which had passed away.

And there was *no need of the sun, neither of the moon,*



*to shine in it* (verse 23), for God was the light and Christ was the lamp of the New Jerusalem, which had emerged from the darkness of tribulation into the light of deliverance and redemption. Here the same figure was utilized that was used by the prophet in a similar description of Israel's return from the Babylonian exile: "The sun shall no more be thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. The sun shall no more go down; neither shall the moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended"—Isa. 60:19-20. Even the casual reader, if not biased by a continuous-history theory, can discern the similarity between these passages and the Revelation descriptions. The prophet Isaiah foretold the deliverance of Israel from exile nearly two hundred years before its occurrence, and he adapted the same figures to describe their restoration to their land that the Seer of Revelation applied to the emergence of the church from the tribulation period. As of restored Israel in their own land again, so of the New Jerusalem—*the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*. These are the figures for the source of all spiritual knowledge and illumination in the City of the Lamb; there can be no alternation of light and darkness; no mixture of truth and error; for God is the source of the light of truth reflected through Christ in the church. The apostle of the Hebrew epistle (chapter 1:3) affirmed this vital truth in the reference to this Father and Son relation: "Who being the brightness (effulgence) of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." It was this presence of God and of Christ in the New Jerusalem that would be its sun, its moon and its light.

In the order of both prophecy and apocalypse the old temple had been destroyed, and its furnishings were no longer recognized. The new temple, the church itself, had no such temporal structure and physical adornment as that which had featured the old; for the old rites were gone

with the old city and its temple which had passed away—and Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which represented the church of the Lamb, was spiritual only and was the new “habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).

This spiritual light of the Holy City would extend to the whole world of darkness: *the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it*—21:24. This part of the vision represented the saved as having come from all nations, that the Jew and Gentile together should walk in the light of the gospel.

The language has its counterpart in the descriptions of Isaiah (chapters 2:2-5; and 62:1-2) which were the prophecies of the new Jerusalem of the new covenant which would include all nations. The prophet said: “O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” This prophecy was made by Isaiah in connection with the establishment of the new institution on the top of the mountains, and the promulgation of the new law from Jerusalem. It is the same imagery in chapter 21:4 of this vision: “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.” In the prophecy of Isa. 62:1-4, the prophet declared that “the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory.” And in this vision the Seer said: “And the kings of the earth do bring glory and honor into it.” It was the vision of all nations yielding to the influence of the gospel, as if the kings of the nations had brought the glory of their crowns and scepters and treasures into the kingdom of God and of Christ by the conversion of the people of the whole world. The vision here is the extension of chapter 11:15: *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*. All of these verses and visions referred to the universal expansion of Christianity in the spread of the gospel over all the world.

In verses *twenty-five* and *twenty-six* the vision represented the gates of city as being always open: *for there shall be no night there*. The gates of the ancient cities were closed at night, and there was no admission to strangers without the city. But the gates of New Jerusalem

should *not be shut at all by day*, therefore entrance to the city was always accessible. The vision was based on the destruction of the beasts of persecution which had been cast into the brimstone lake, and there were no enemies remaining to threaten the citizenry of the city. In the period of persecution the church had been hindered in the propagation and the proclamation of the gospel, but the night of tribulation had ended. The figure was related to the motion of the globe in orbit; its diurnal revolution causes the daily and annual changes in the sun which produce the alternation of light and darkness. But spiritually there would be no such rotation, for the night of the tribulation had come to end; there was no longer the hindering power of the heathen persecutors in the spreading of the light of the gospel—the darkness had been dispelled and the day had dawned for the church. It can be seen again that the literal application of these figures of speech would demolish the beauty of the vision as well as its truth in the spiritual application of the symbols.

In the *twenty-sixth* verse the Seer saw the Gentile world entering into the church through its open gates under the world-wide commission: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; and, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15) And the stipulated terms upon which men of all nations should enter into the spiritual refuge of the city of the Lamb are included in the commands of the commission itself: *He that believeth (the gospel) and is baptized shall be saved; and, Baptizing them in (into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Spirit).*

The vision represented the inclusion of *the nations* among the blessed saved in the church. The *glory and honor of the nations*, of verse *twenty-six*, as in verse *twenty-four*, referred to the conversion and christianization of the heathen world. The fact that the vision represented that these kings would *still be kings* is yet another indication that it was not a vision of heaven. It meant that the heathen would find their way out of the darkness of paganism into the light of Christianity under the sway of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings

and the Lord of lords. The New Jerusalem would co-exist with the nations as “all nations flow unto it”; and accept Him who came to fulfill “the desire of all nations” (Hag. 2:7) for the glory of God. The kings of the earth contributed to His glory in the conversion of the people of their nations to the Christ of this apocalypse.

The pristine purity of the church of the Lamb was pictured in verse *twenty-seven* of the chapter: *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.* These terms and phrases and words describe the whole category of the moral and spiritual corruption of heathendom. The first chapter of Romans is an inspired commentary on the depths of degradation into which the heathen world had sunken by these practices because, said Paul, “they did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” But these impurities of heathenism could gain no admission or entrance into the realm of the Lamb's Bride. The *defiled* could not enter, because the gospel removed all moral defilement. The paganistic abominations could not enter, for the gospel separated from all heathen idolatry. The deceivers who by making *a lie* had seduced the inhabitants of the earth into emperor-worship could not enter, for the gospel destroyed the doctrines of antichrist. Wherefore, only *they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*—whose names were entered into the registry of the New Jerusalem by “doing his commandments” could “enter in through the gates into the city.”

## XV.

### THE ABUNDANCE OF THE SYMBOLIC BLESSINGS IN THE SPIRITUAL NEW JERUSALEM (Chapter 22:1-5)

“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."

The first five verses of this the last chapter of Revelation are contextually joined to the last verses of the preceding chapter, to the section including verses ten to twenty-seven, as a continuation of the spiritual characteristics of the New Jerusalem. The text of the twenty-first chapter allows for the distinction between the constituent features of the descriptions of the city and the blessings that flow in it for its citizenry. The shift from the one to the other begins with verse *ten* of chapter *twenty-one* and continues through verse *five* of chapter *twenty-two*; hence, the break in the context of the two chapters.

It must be kept in mind that the term *Jerusalem* was employed metaphorically to represent the spiritual church in a state of triumph and glory. The ancient Jews regarded the tabernacle, the temple and Jerusalem itself, as having descended directly from God. But the inspired apostles of the New Testament, in correspondence with the old order, made the church of the new covenant the spiritual tabernacle (Heb. 9:1-12) and temple (I Cor. 3:16) and city (Heb. 12:22). The noblest and highest emotion, and the most sacred and soothing and solacing sentiment, relating to the scriptural descriptions of the New Jerusalem have found expression in our melodious hymns of hope and praise and adoration.

Coming now to the last chapter of this miraculously marvellous apocalypse, before which we have stood with enthralled wonderment and amazement and awe, let us hear the Seer unfold the closing rapturous scenes.

## (1) The river of life—22:1.

The symbols of flowing rivers and streams of water run through the entire body of the scriptures. Literally, for a source of supply and security a great city was situated on the river; and figuratively it was applied to the needs of the soul and the source of all spiritual blessing. The mention of the flowing stream was in the description of the garden of Eden in Gen. 2:10. When God planted the garden for the abode of the first pair it was said that “a river went out of Eden to water the garden”; and its waters were parted into four streams which formed the mighty rivers which *compassed* the later inhabited land and upon the banks of which great cities were built. The name of the first river was *Pison* “which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there was gold.” The second river was *Gihon*, which encompassed Ethiopia. The third river was *Hiddekel*, which bordered Syria; and the fourth river was the famed *Euphrates* which was called “the great river” (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7); and which formed the eastern boundary of the Promised Land (Deut. 11:24), and of David’s conquests (II Sam. 8:3—I Chron. 18:1-3), and beside which the captive Jew wept in Babylon (Psa. 137:1). It was the river associated with the prophecies of Jeremiah (chapters 13:4-7; 46:2-10; 51:63) concerning the fortunes of Israel, and in the apocalypses of Revelation (chapters 9:14; 16:12) in connection with the events pertaining to the tribulation period of the church.

The beauty and blessing of the church was made the object of prophetic psalmody by the singer of Israel in the figurative cadence of Psalms 46: “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.” This sublime psalm blends into the visions of Revelation. The Psalmist identified this “city of God” by his reference to the *holy place* of the tabernacles—the old and the new tabernacles—and the holy place of the old was the type of

the new. It was a thousand years before the establishment of the church that David swept the harp of psalm-prophecy and sang of this city of God. It was the new Zion, the new Jerusalem, His church of the new covenant, in which the river of divine love should perpetually flow; *the streams whereof*—the channels of his love—should distribute the benefits which *make glad* the people of God.

The *breadth* and *length* and *depth* and *height* of infinite love (Eph. 3:18) cannot be finitely comprehended, but in the symbolism of the New Jerusalem, with its ever widening and deepening stream, it flows through the church to bring blessings abundant.

The *pure river* of the New Jerusalem had no pollution. It was *clear as crystal*, without mingled elements to obscure its entrancing brightness. It *proceeded out of the throne of God*, its source was perennial and no force of man could stop its flow.

It was *in the midst of the street*, where without respect of persons it was accessible all to drink of its water freely. It was symbolic of the fullness of life and salvation in which the redeemed shared with unhindered and unrestrained access.

## (2) The tree of life—22:2.

The word *tree* in the text is in singular number, but it must of necessity be considered collectively for the verse reads: *On either side of the river was there the tree of life*. The phrase *either side* means each side, as in the crucifixion of Christ (Jno. 20:18) with the thieves, “on either side one.” It was evidently the collective use of the word *tree*, as it was of the *street* also of the great and grand city, described a streetway, or a passage system; otherwise there was a vision of traffic congestion in the New Jerusalem! The tree of life was envisioned as bordering the banks of the river of life—on either side of it—affording to all inhabitants the source of perpetual spiritual blessings.

It is not uncommon for a species of tree peculiar to a certain geography to be described in the singular term, but referring to its collective growth. The balsam tree of Gilead was not one tree but rather a *kind* that flourished in

Gilead. So the reference to the *tree of life* on each side of the *river of life* was not intended to limit the picture to one tree, but rather to make known its *kind*—it was the tree of *life*, to be found only in the New Jerusalem. Its fruit was life-giving, and its balm was soul-healing. The concept adds to the force of these figures and enlarges the range of their truths.

The tree of life was further described as bearing *twelve manner of fruits* and its yield was *every month*. The numeral *twelve* in its use in chapter twenty-one was applied to the apostles, which must also be true here, to symbolize that apostolic teaching, or doctrine, was the all-sufficient source of spiritual sustenance. The yielding of the fruit *every month*, or the whole twelve months of the year, indicated that there were no seasons in this fruit-bearing, no unyielding intervals—the spiritual supply was perennial and perpetual.

The spiritual vision was extended in the description: *the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*. As there will be no imperfections in heaven, and consequently no need of healing there, here is another proof that this whole vision was the symbolic description of the church in the state of triumph and victory over the persecutions. The *healing of the nations* meant the source of salvation for all of every tongue or clime or race of man. The prophet Jeremiah used a similar figure (Jer. 8:22) in reference to Israel: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" The substance of the vision was that in the New Jerusalem, the church of the Redeemer and of the redeemed, there was an all-provident tree which produced the fruit of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), and which was the remedy for every ill or want (I Jno. 1:7; 2:1-2) That balsam tree that grew only in the choice land of Gilead, which produced the balm known as *balsamodendron Gileadense*, was the similar and appropriate symbol of spiritual healing in the message of the prophet Jeremiah to the nation of Israel. This balm was highly esteemed for its healing properties (Ezek. 27:17), and was once an important article of merchandise among



the eastern people. The language of Jeremiah (chapter 8:22; 46:11; 51:8) cannot be exceeded in eloquence and tenderness in the expression of disappointment that "the daughter of Zion," the chosen people of God, should remain spiritually wounded and diseased, when there was healing balm of unfailing remedy within their reach. There could have been no finer figure of divine grace than *the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations* in the delineations of the New Jerusalem.

(3) The throne of God and of the Lamb—22:3.

The divine rule of God and of Christ together in the "kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5) removed the penal judgment for sin from the inhabitants of the redeemed city—*and there shall be no more curse*—that is, no more of anything that was accursed, no accursed person or thing should have a place in the Holy City. The curse of sin was removed by Jesus Christ. The apostle declared that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." It was this death of ignominy on the cross, as declared in the following verse (14) that brought "the blessing of Abraham . . . on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." In the Holy City Jerusalem there should be *no more curse* of sin to the redeemed inhabitants.

There was also a dual meaning attached to this symbol of the curse. In the period of the tribulation there had been the edict for the worship of the emperor in bowing to the Caesar-image, and all who refused submission were placed under the imperial curse. Having come out of the tribulation, the persecutors cast into the brimstone lake, the victors over oppression were symbolized as delivered from the curse of the imperial edict. From this setting which remains always in the background of Revelation, and much of the time in the foreground, the progressive application was made to the spiritual state of the New Jerusalem church.

In the invironment of the new state the constituency

of the ransomed city should not only pay homage of worship to Him who was on the throne, but should also do service—*his servants shall serve him* (verse 3). At the beginning of the Revelation (chapter 1:6) John said that Jesus Christ *hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father* in his church and kingdom here; and in chapter 5:10 the Seer said that this kingly and priestly characterlation. The persecuting beast had “caused all, both small further indication that the descriptions were of the church, and not of heaven. It is full harmony with the general teaching of the New Testament that Christians are priests in the church now (I Pet. 2:5, 9) and the church therefore is “a holy priesthood.”

(4) The mark of recognition and approval—22:4.

The citizenry should *see his face* in the sense of having the recognition and approval of the One whom they served. The face of the Lord was said to be *against* them that do evil (I Pet. 3:12); and the wicked rulers of the nations (Rev. 6:16) implored the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them for a cover to hide them from the face of the One on the throne. But the righteous *see his face* in acceptable and approved service rendered to him. “Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies sake’ (Psa. 31:16); and, “Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.” To see the face of God meant to bask under the smile of his approval. It therefore denoted the love and the favor of God. The receiving of his name in their foreheads—and *his name shall be in their foreheads*—was the mark of submission and subservience to Christ the Lamb in contrast with the *mark of the beast* in the hand or on the foreheads of the devotees of emperor-worship, so frequently mentioned in the previous chapters of this Revelation. The persecuting beast had “caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 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” (chapter 13:16-17); and, “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the

same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God" (chapter 14:9-10); but the victors "over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name" were among the throng standing on the sea of glass (chapter 15:2-3) singing "the song of Moses, the servant God, and the song of the Lamb; and it was this throng which had *the name of the Father* written in their foreheads" (chapter 15:2). So the *name* in the foreheads of chapter 22:4 was the symbolic designation that they were the servants of God.

(5) The reigning saints—22:5.

In repetition of previous statements in the context, *verse five* is a rephrasing of the words repeated: *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.* (See comments on chapter 21:3). The use of the word *night* has application to the darkness of the whole heathen world, as so used in other epistles (II Cor. 6:14-16), in contrast with the truth of the gospel (Acts 26:18) sent to all dark nations concerning which Jesus said to Saul: "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in me." The same Saul, after becoming the apostle of Christ to the world of heathen darkness, exhorted the Gentile church (Eph. 5:11-14) to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (heathenism), but rather reprove them . . . it is a shame to even speak of those things which are done in secret . . . for whatsoever doth make manifest is light . . . wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead (the state of darkness), and Christ shall give thee light." So the words of the Seer in *verse five* of this chapter—*for the Lord God giveth them light*—had specific reference to the absolute absence of any element of heathen darkness in the new and renovated state of the Holy City, the bride of the Lamb.

The apocalypse proper ended with this verse, as *verse six* was the beginning of the Seer's own concluding comments on the vision which he had received. The apocalyptic

descriptions were all completed, and the terse finale of the grand and majestic pageant was clothed in the crowning declaration: **AND THEY SHALL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER.**

The prophet Daniel foretold in the interpretation of king Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:44) that in the days of the Roman kings the God of heaven would "set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed"; and he added in the words of the apocalypse that "it shall stand forever." The prophet envisioned in this interpretation the rise and fall of Babylonia, Media and Persia, and Macedonia or Grecia, and clearly indicated the reign of the Caesar's of the Roman empire as the fourth monarchy in the succession of kings. It was *in the days of these kings*, in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, that Jesus made the announcement (Mark 1:14-15) "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." In the record of Matt. 4:17 it is stated that "from that time Jesus began to preach and to say: repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It was named *the kingdom of God* because "the God of heaven" set it up; but it was called *the kingdom of heaven* because of its spiritual character—it was from heaven. The people of that day understood the meaning of the word *kingdom*; they had lived under no other form of government from the Babylonians to the Romans; but Jesus distinguished his kingdom from all others in origin and in nature when he named it the *kingdom of heaven*. Before Pontius Pilate (Jno. 18:36) he declared: *Now is my kingdom not from hence*. The phrase *from hence* means from *here*; it is here but it is not from here—because it is the *kingdom of heaven*, and therefore *from heaven*. And the word *now*, the first word of the sentence—*now is my kingdom not from hence*—meant that it would be established *then*, at that time, for Jesus had announced that *the time is fulfilled*.

References to the kingdom which Jesus Christ came to establish all point either forward or backward to the Day of Pentecost, of Acts the second chapter, as the time of its establishment. The prophecy of Dan. 7:13-14 connected its beginning with the ascension of Christ to heaven when it was given him "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom": and in description of the same ascension scenes by the

apostle of Hebrews (chapter 1:8) he declared that it was done. The gospel of Mark (9:1) records the statement of Jesus that some standing in his presence should not “taste of death” (would not die) until this kingdom had come “with power—they would be the living witnesses to its establishment. After his ascension, in conversation with his future apostles, he made the explanation to them (Acts 1:8) that the coming of the kingdom would accompany the descent of the Spirit and the power, and it is a matter of gospel record (Acts 2:1-4) that the Spirit and the power were received on the Day of Pentecost. It follows therefore as an inescapable scriptural conclusion that the kingdom of God and Christ, otherwise designated the kingdom of heaven, came on that day of Acts the second chapter; and that it was in fulfillment of the time prophecies of the Old Testament.

After Pentecost all references to the existence and presence of the kingdom pointed back to the second chapter of Acts, to the Day of Pentecost. The preaching of the kingdom was the subject of repeated references in the *book of Acts*; and in the epistles to the churches the members were told that they had been translated into it (Col. 1:13-14); and that the church to which they belonged is itself the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:5); and that this kingdom had been received (Heb. 12:22-28) simultaneously with the church, and that it is the church. Finally, the Seer of Revelation made his signatory to the churches (Rev. 1:9) in the words: “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, when the apocalypse of John was composed the kingdom of Christ was a present existing thing, and John the apostle was in it with his companions in tribulation.

The high note with which the apocalypse ended (chapter 22:5)—*and they shall reign forever and ever*—meant therefore—in the light of the textual and contextual teaching, and precept upon precept from other portions of the Old and the New scriptures—that the victorious saints reigned with Christ in the kingdom which would stand *forever* here, and *forever and ever* hereafter. Entrance into it here is

entrance into the church. (Matt. 16:18-20); and there will be no exit from it for the faithful hereafter (II Pet. 1:11), for the eternal state is but an *abundant entrance* into an everlasting kingdom already received and possessed, which cannot be moved (Heb. 12:28); and of which heaven will be the final and abundant fruition of its glorified realm.

Here ended the vision of the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb, the church of Christ. The remainder of the chapter is in the character of a conclusion to the apocalyptic disclosures. The complete symbolic picture of the fortunes of the church, standing on the threshold of the tribulation, had passed before John's enraptured view, to the vindication of the cause for which they were soon to suffer. The ending of the vision demonstrated that the church cannot die, as the believer himself who lives in Jesus Christ never dies. (Jno. 11:26) The New Testament concept of the believer's life in Christ minimizes death and magnifies the transition to where he is: "That where I am, there ye may be also" (Jno. 14:3) and, "for me to live is Christ (to preach), but to die is gain . . . and to be with Christ; which is far better." (Phil. 1:21-23) In this world death has no more dominion (Rom. 6:7-9) over the risen believer (Col. 3:1-4), whose affections have been set on the things above where Christ is enthroned with God; for he views this life as a pilgrimage and as a place of sojourning (Heb. 11:13), knowing that his abiding citizenship is in heaven. (Phil. 3:20-21)

The New Jerusalem was envisioned as the home of the saints; but it was not in heaven—it descended out of heaven from God; it was descriptive of the new surroundings of the church with Judaism removed and heathenism overcome. The apocalypse completed, John proceeded to his concluding observations concerning things both retrospective and prospective which were related to this wonderful visional panorama.

# **BOOK OF REVELATION**

## **SECTION FIVE**

### **THE APOCALYPTIC EPILOGUE**

**(CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: VERSES 6 TO 21)**





CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: VERSES SIX TO  
TWENTY-ONE

“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. 7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. 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 fellowservant, 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. 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 whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, 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. 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.”

# THE APOCALYPTIC EPILOGUE

## I.

### THE COMPLETION AND CULMINATION OF APOCALYPTIC REVELATION

In the arrangement of this commentary the first and the second sections are a presentation of *The Apocalyptic Preview*, dealing with the scope of biblical visions; and *The Visional Prologue*, presenting an analysis of the messages to the seven churches as an approach to the Revelation proper. The third section is an exposition of *The Vision Concerning The Conquering Christ*; and the fourth section is the explanation of *The Vision Concerning The Victorious Church*.

The most significant events in all epochs of the world since the creation of mankind are connected with this dispensation marked as the fullness of time. (Gal. 4:4) It was the beginning of the era of the Lord and Saviour of man, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. The transition from the old covenant was eventuated by his birth, the cross, the ascension, Pentecost, Patmos, the fall of Jerusalem, and end of Judaism and the expansion of Christianity. The inevitable commanding conclusion is that all of these events culminated into the fulfillment of the long-continuing process comprehensive of the entire system of judgment and scheme of redemption—the completion and the end of all divine revelation. As it is biblically certain that the God of heaven in times of old descended, in the Old Testament metaphor, on the clouds of heaven to execute judgment on ancient wicked nations and cities (Isaiah 13 and 19), so certainly did the Son of man come in the clouds with his angels of power to execute judgment on the once great city of Jerusalem, guilty of his blood and the blood of his saints and martyrs.

This triumphal administration of judgment has been wondrously portrayed in the scenes of the apocalypse, depicting the end of Judaism with the fall of Jerusalem; and the triumph of Christianity in the glory of the New Jeru-

salem, the church of the Lord of all glory. Before its march of advance the evil powers of paganism collapsed and the empire of heathenism crumbled. It was this display of divine judgment and supreme power that Israel's Psalmist anticipated in the prophetic imagery of the second psalm:

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

It does not require a detailed analysis to prove that this sublime psalm was a prophecy on the fall of heathendom by the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. It is notably significant that in Acts 13:33 and in Heb. 1:5 the apostles Peter and Paul applied this second psalm to the accession of Jesus Christ to the throne of his power in heaven. It can be observed without the stretch of imagination that the fulfillment of the apocalypse was connected with the language of the prophetic psalm.

## II.

### THE CONFIRMATION OF THE VISION

The epilogue from verse six to the end of chapter twenty-two consists in a seven-point confirmation of its

contents as a direct communication from God through Jesus Christ. In verses *six* and *seven* the angel verified the truthfulness of the words of the book; in verses *eight* and *nine* John added his own testimony to the witness of the angel, and to the fact of the direct communication between himself and the angel; in verses *ten* to *fifteen* the judicial admonitions in consequence of the apocalypses were recorded; in verse *sixteen* the words of Jesus himself were employed to authenticate the visions; in verse *seventeen* the opportunity and obligation for the evangelization of all the world, as first announced by the Lord in the Great Commission and the Great Invitation (Matt. 28:18-20; Matt. 11:28-30), were renewed; in verses *eighteen* to *twenty* the final warning against the diversion and perversion of God's words were issued; and in verse *twenty-one*—the benediction of divine grace closed the book of Revelation with the inspired Seer's *amen*.

(1) The confirmation of the testimony of the angel—22:6-11.

Verse 6: *These sayings are faithful and true: the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.* This is the verification of the truth of the whole apocalypse by John after the vision was ended. Here the epilogue corresponded with the prologue. It was the reiteration and the re-affirmation of chapter 1:1-5. It corresponded to the introduction and reverted to the same theme. It was the claim of the authorship of the Revelation repeated in the expression *I John* in both chapter 1:8 and chapter 22:8. It was the seal of its being a revelation from God—John *heard and saw these things*. His epilogue was in verbal agreement with the prologue, and ends with the affirmation of direct communication with God and Jesus Christ.

1. *These sayings are faithful and true.* This unequivocal claim of integrity has parallel in the postulation of Heb. 1:1-2, that the God who had spoken *unto the fathers* by the prophets had shown *unto his servants* these things by John. The same God who had inspired John and Revelation therefore possessed the same credentials of inspiration.

2. *The things which must shortly be done.* The verbal agreement with chapter 1:1 here emphasized that the things revealed were of high importance and attention to them was imperative because of the shortness of time. It again supports the main thesis of this treatise that the events belonged to this period of time.

Verse 7: *Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.* Here again John reverted to the first chapter of the book in order to affirm the truth of what had there been said prior to the beginning of the vision.

1. *Behold, I come quickly.* At this point Jesus himself was not speaking, as when these words were first uttered by him; but John was here quoting the words of Jesus which had previously been spoken. Here the person sent was speaking for the Sender.

There are three key words in the context: *signify* and *shortly* and *quickly*. These words were significant of the method of conveying the revelation through *signs*; and the time for the fulfillment was *impending*; and the coming of the Lord would be in relation to the events and concurrent with them. The three words together meant that everything relevant to the catastrophe and calamities predicted and depicted were about to come to pass. *Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation*—Jesus in Matt. 23:36.

2. *Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.* But the book had not yet been written, yet its message was imperative and the reading of it to *his servants* was urgent. The fact that this somewhat ominous statement was made in the first chapter and repeated in the last chapter, thus before and after the vision was received, accentuates the immediacy of its contents. Why the urgency of this command if the events were so remote as the future theory represents?

Verses 8-9: *And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.* John had been previously commanded not to worship the angel, but God only. (Chapter 19:10) It is inconceivable that he would disobey

the order by doing so here. It has been explained that John was mistaken in the identity of the angel in this instance, believing him to be Jesus. But there is no such intimation in the context. John's memory was not so short as to have forgotten, even under the overwhelming circumstances of an angel's appearance, the so recent prohibition against the worship of the angel. To the contrary, a reappearance of the angel would have reminded him of the previous command. The obviously correct view therefore is that John was here restating what had previously occurred for a necessary emphasis, just as he had quoted the words of Jesus in verse 7.

In the restatement of what had occurred in the record of chapter 19:10, John added that the angel had said: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethen the prophets. This word of the angel links the apocalypse of John with those of the Old Testament, and as being of the same character, content and source; and of the same application as to their respective periods in their current history. A prophetic spiritual brotherhood had been displayed by the apocalypse, inspired by the same Spirit; even in the repeated use of the same words and phrases and the employment of the same symbols. The visions of the Old Testament prophets related to the judgments on Babylon and Egypt and to Israel's deliverance from exile; and the visions of John in like manner pertained to the destruction of Jerusalem and the victory of the church over Judaism and heathenism. But the statement of the angel exalted John's inspired credentials and authority as the author of Revelation to that of the prophets of the old dispensation.

The words of the angel further included *them which keep the sayings of this book*. This number included all to whom John had addressed the letters and this apocalypse and who were exhorted to read, heed and keep the things written in it. The angel classed himself as being among them all, therefore was not the object of their worship. It meant that no man or angel is to be revered or worshiped: *worship God*. The Son of God said to Satan, the head of the diabolical realm who was commanding his worship:

“It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

Verse 10: *Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.* The metaphor of sealing in respect to visions denoted secrecy, or that which was not ready to be disclosed. The prophet Daniel was instructed to “shut up the words, and seal the book” (Dan. 9:24; 12:4, 9) for the events prophesied were far distant and were not *at hand* nor *shortly* to come to pass; therefore the prophet was commanded to “seal up the vision”; and he was told that the *words* of it were “closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” So it was with the vision of John in chapter 10:4—the things which were not intended for disclosure he was commanded to *seal up* and *write them not*. But in chapter 22:10 the angel enjoined John to *seal not* the contents of *this book*; and the reason was stated—*for the time is at hand*. For comparison again, in Dan. 8:26, the prophet was directed to shut up the vision *for it shall be many days*; but in Rev. 22:10 John was ordered to *seal not . . . for the time is at hand*. The time had come for the public announcement of the things enfolded in the seals and the trumpets—therefore, let it be known. This is the obvious distinction in the significance of the two commands in the phrases *seal up* and *seal not up*.

The use of the phrase *the time is at hand* before the visions were introduced, and in exactly the same words following so closely the order to seal not up the sayings of the vision, certainly implied with necessary inference the immediate importance of the visions; and it undeniably has the same import of immediacy as the announcement of Jesus (Mark 1:15) that the kingdom of God is *at hand*. The uses of this phrase in several other passages bear the same meaning and are subject to the same application. The statement of Paul (Rom. 13:12) that “the night is far spent, the day is *at hand*” must be considered with his further statement (Rom. 16:20) that “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet *shortly*, both of which declarations were the anticipations of the impending events. To the Philippians (Phil. 4:5) he said: The Lord is *at hand*; and Peter said (I Pet. 4:7) that “the end of all



things is *at hand*”—that is, the end of the Jewish state and all things pertaining to it. To impart any other meaning to the phrase *at hand* in these passages, and apply them to the end of time, would amount to convicting the inspired apostles of contradictions and of teaching error on the second coming of the Lord, which was *not at hand* (II Thess. 2:2)—for he did not so come, neither as yet has done so. And if *at hand* can be stretched to the end of time in these instances, it obliterates the meaning of the same expressions in reference to his kingdom. It adds up to one conclusion: the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple and termination of the Jewish theocracy, together with the end of the Jewish state with its attendant tribulations, were the impending ominous events before the New Testament churches and the object of many references in the epistles of the apostles.

Admonishing the Jews of the Dispersion, James exhorted: “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” The Lord’s second coming was not nigh—it did not occur; so it is evident that the apostle’s monitory declaration referred to the imminent events envisioned in John’s apocalypse. (Jas. 4:7-8)

Verse 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.* These admonitions were coupled with the warnings that the time was at hand; and the events being so near, so shortly to come to pass, no change in the characters of the wicked devotees of the imperial beast or of conditions in the heathen world could be expected; but all others were exhorted to maintain their state of righteousness and holiness, as the storm approached.

The words of this category of characters were significant. The *unjust* were the unbelievers in general; the *filthy* were those who were defiled by heathen practices; the *righteous* were the justified, who had obeyed the gospel; and the added term *holy* implied the maintaining of the life of separation from sin into which they had entered by justification. They had become righteous through justifica-

tion by obedience to the gospel; they would remain holy by living apart from sin and its defilements.

The passage contains a judicial declaration upon the incorrigible heathen enemies and was indicative of the ultimate destiny where there can be no reformation; combined with an appeal to the righteous and the holy to pass through tribulation with washed robes and undefiled garments, for the threat of heathen influence would continue to be a reality, after the persecution itself had ceased.

John had reverted to a pre-persecution exhortation based on what he had heard and seen in the vision; and he was obeying the command to *seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book*. The purpose of the admonition was to ready and steady them for the impending onslaught.

There is an extended and continuous application of the solemn words of *verse eleven*. When all of the events of time shall have transpired, and the judgments shall have descended and shall have been executed on all of the forces of evil; the conditions of men respectively shall have been unchangeably fixed for eternity. Here may be the proper application to the everlasting state of all people in the world that has no end. The basis of the apocalyptic warning is that eternal truth.

(2) The corroborative testimony of Jesus to that of John and of the angel—22:12-13.

Verse 12: *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be*. The imminence of the things envisioned was here re-emphasized in the word *quickly* to the degree of having become repetitious, but for that precise purpose—the alerting of the saints in every part of the Roman world.

The reminder that *my reward is with me* was a dual pronouncement of threat and promise. There would be the execution of judgment on the characters represented by the beasts and their followers; and the bestowal of the trophies of victory and reward to the saints of the tribulation. This distribution of reward and retribution was announced in the words: *to give every man according as his*

*work shall be.* Here again was the statement of an eternal principle with an everlasting application, the basis of which was in the fact as applied to the visional circumstances; but was nevertheless indicative of the truth couched in numerous epistolary references (Rom. 2:6—14:12; I Cor. 3:8—5:10)—that judgment by works is not subject to a single judicial decision, but is a continual process in the lives of men.

Verse 13: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.* The title of this verse, Alpha and Omega, belonged to Christ alone in this connection, and represented the finality of the sayings of the vision—the first and the last, the beginning and the end, were the words of his authority—the *yea* and the *amen* from which there could be no appeal and for which there could be no repeal. The vision, as previous shown, had closed and these words of Christ were being quoted by John to corroborate and verify his post-vision sayings of this last chapter, and to vindicate all of the claims of credibility. The words of *verse thirteen* meant—so be it, all in all as here recorded, **For** it came from Christ the *All In All* of divine jurisprudence and justice.

(3) The seven apocalyptic beatitudes of the bride of the Lamb, the victorious church—22:14-16.

Verse 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.* This beautiful beatitude was the last of a cluster of the *blessed* passages of Revelation, and it rises to the highest heights of the mountain ranges of the visions of the blessed in the descriptions of their trials. After the first pronouncement of blessing in chapter one, their contexts appear as a sort of parentheses in the subject matter of the visions.

There are seven of these beatitudes in Revelation, which deserve to be listed as a parenthesis here:

The *first* beatitude was the blessing for them that read, heard and kept the words of the Seer, because the time was so near—chapter 1:3.

The *second* was the benedictory for the future martyrs who should die in the cause of the Lord from henceforth—chapter 14:13.

The *third* was in praise of the state of grace for those who were aware of the imminence of ominous events and who lived in sustained preparation to meet the crisis—chapter 16:15.

The *fourth* included the faithful saints who survived the persecutions and participated in the renewed and continuous fellowship of the victorious Bride in the marriage supper of the Lamb—chapter 19:9.

The *fifth* was the blessed state of victory shared by the martyrs who “lived and reigned with Christ” in complete victory, which was symbolized by elevating the souls under the altar (chapter 6) to positions on the throne (chapter 20) and which symbolized the resurrection of the cause for which they died, and therefore figuratively designated the first resurrection in which the enthroned souls had part—chapter 20:6.

The *sixth* was exhortatory to all who had received the completed apocalypse, and maintained faithful adherence to all of the sayings embodied in the visions—chapter 22:7.

The *seventh* was the blessing of reward for all, after the scenes of persecution had been accomplished, and the trials of the tribulation were ended, who through obedience entered the opened gates into the city of the new Jerusalem, the redeemed Bride of the Lamb, the victorious church of Christ—chapter 22:14.

This high note of hope in the form of beatitudes permeated the apocalypse from the first chapter to the last, and the character of them adds to the accumulation of evidence that the visions of Revelation belonged to the tribulation period of the early churches.

Returning to the text of chapter 22:14, the important words *do his commandments* constitute an imperative command. The condition of entering this *City of God*, the church, was obedience to the gospel.

The revisions that have changed the phrase “do his commandments” to “wash their robes” have served only to weaken the text and obscure its meaning. It is a specific

gospel text which should not be generalized by a tampering with its words, a thing that all of the late so-called revisions appear to be specializing in doing. The text is sublime as it reads and it means that the gospel must be obeyed.

The clause that *they may have right to the tree of life* meant the title to it. The word *right* does not here merely mean a right or privilege of entering the city—but indicates the title of inheritance. The one who enters “through the gates into the city” has *right* to the tree of life—to the inheritance of the *life* which is the fruit of the tree, as set forth in the comments on verse *three* of this chapter. It is an edifying concept of the source of spiritual life in the church of God and of Christ.

Verse 15: *For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.* These all were the aggregation of the enemies of Christ and the saints and the persecutors of the church and their followers. The characters of all who were *without* the city were in contrast with all who were *within* it. The expression *without are dogs* had the implication that all who were without were of that classification, a term of various connotations. It was descriptive of the evil and impious characters that inhabit the outside. Among the Jews the dog was typical of that which was unclean and vile. The Mosaic law decreed that the hire of a harlot and the price of a dog were abominable to God and were not acceptable for the offerings and the vows of the law. (Deut. 23:18) Paul warned the Philippians to *beware* of the dogs (Phil. 3:2) which meant the cautious avoidance of Gentile influence and affiliation. The Jews called the Gentiles dogs; but here the unbelieving Jews had so classified themselves and the term had boomeranged and fallen back upon them. Jesus said to his disciples; “Give not that which is holy to the dogs,” meaning that the pure principles of his teaching should not be compromised or mixed with the inferior philosophies and practices of the heathen world surrounding them. None of these evil things could enter the city of God—all *dogs* were without.

For comments on the terms *sorcerers*, *whoremongers* and *liars* turn to chapter 21:8,27. These were terms to

designate heathenism and to define their practices; and these words of John constituted a pronouncement for the eternal exclusion of all classes which these evils represented, and of all who do not obey his commandments—the gospel which Jesus Christ had commissioned his ambassadors to preach to all the world.

Verse 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.* This passage is one of the pinnacles of John's utterances in the book of Revelation, of which there had been many. It affirmed that He who had commissioned his angel to testify the things of the apocalypse was the rightful heir to the kingdom and throne of Judah's sceptre as the legal and regal descendant of David. The statement forms an *epexegetical* insertion of a leading point for special emphasis—that is, an additional explanatory point, put or set in the text for extra accent; and in this instance the purpose was to focus the attention on *who* had spoken in the visions. He who was the Son of David according to flesh, the fulfillment of all Davidic prophecies and promises, was in these visions the *Bright And Morning Star* to herald the dawn for the persecuted church. In numerous other passages he was said to occupy the throne of David (Acts 2:29-33); and to bring the blessings and mercies of David (Acts 13:34); and to set up the tabernacle of David (Acts 15:13-17); and to hold the key of David (Isa. 22:22—Rev. 3:7).

All of the prophecies relating to David's throne have been fulfilled in the ascendancy of Jesus Christ to the throne in heaven; from which throne He had been the Speaker of the apocalypse. As the *Root* and *Offspring* of David, he had spoken with a sovereign and royal authority above kings of the nations or the emperors of the imperial dynasty; the throne of David was greater than the throne of Caesar; and kingdom of heaven was superior to the dominions of any earthly government. He was the victorious *Rider of the white horse* and his Cause had triumphed. Christ was the Victor; the persecutors were the vanquished; and the saints of tribulation were the rewarded in the visions that had been concluded.

## III

## THE INVITATIONAL AND BENEDICTORY CONCLUSION

Verse 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.* As heretofore mentioned, these concluding admonitory words were the sayings of John himself, not of Jesus, in which he sounded the note of an unlimited invitation, but not an unconditional one. This *seventeenth* verse of the last chapter of Revelation has had a first place in gospel preaching for centuries. It has been proclaimed the high note of redemption and has been compared to ringing the bells of heaven. It was the call to all men to come to the river and the tree of life within the wonderful city of verse *fourteen*. The city was the New Jerusalem, which has been specifically and repeatedly designated the Lamb's Bride—the church of Christ.

The *Spirit* which joined in this invitation was the *One Spirit* before the apocalyptic throne, from which the seven spirits of the vision had proceeded. Joined with the Spirit in this great invitation was the *Bride*, bidding all to come within her walls. And the Seer himself exhorted *any one* who *heareth*—who had heard the Spirit and the Bride say, Come—to ring the bell and join the refrain by saying, Come. And all who would thereafter hear this book of Revelation read in the churches (1:3) should join the glad chorus and say, Come. All who were *athirst*, without the water of salvation, were entreated to come, to the river which flowed the thirst-quenching water of life, to drink of which one would never thirst again. (Jno. 4:14) And to make this gospel call all inclusive John said: *whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* Salvation full and free was offered to all, but within the sphere of salvation—the church. And it was made conditional by in saying *whosoever will*, and in the accompanying word *take*. These words expressed conditions. They required that the will of man shall yield to the will of God in the doing of the commandments of verse *fourteen*. The phrase *let him come* implies that the gospel is persuasive, not coercive. No one can

shoot the gospel into a sinner nor machine-gun Christianity into a heathen—but *he that will*, whosoever or wheresoever he may be, can come without hindrance or restraint.

Verses 18-19: *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 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.* These verses were prefaced by the statement of John *for I testify unto every man*. The preposition *for* connects this verse with the preceding verse *seventeen*. It conveys the meaning: in view of which, or in consideration of which, or with reference to which—that is, the universal invitation brought forth a universal admonition, a caution and a warning: the fateful consequences of *adding to* or *taking from* the Word of God. Though the restriction in itself was limited to *these things* and *this book*, the other portions of the Word of God in the other epistles are not less important than the book of Revelation, and the injunction therefore applies with equal appeal and penalty to all of the inspired scriptures. It means that any alteration of them in any degree is criminal in the sight of God.

The same injunction was included in the Mosaic law (Deut. 4:2); and the principle was embodied in the apostolic epistles (I Cor. 4:6—II Jno. 9). The effect in its application of all scripture would be the same (II Tim. 3:16-17) and the consequences therefore the same. An instance of the evil results of presumptuous men changing the truth was put into the record in the cases of Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus (I Tim. 1:19-20—II Tim. 2:17-18); and the direful end of such presumption is damnation. (Rom. 1:22-25—II Thess. 2:8-12)

The consequences of such interpolation and deduction were the anathemas of the plagues and forfeiture of all portion in the book of life, the holy city, or the promised rewards. The names of all who would thus divert and pervert divine revelation would be erased from the registry of the citizens of the city of God.

Verse 20: *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* Since



John was here writing the epilogue to the apocalypse, and the vision had been completed, the reference to these words of Jesus was the quotation of what he had said to John in the vision. And the words, *surely, I come quickly*, were not in reference to the second coming of the Christ; but rather the promise to the churches in tribulation. He had so promised, and that repeatedly, to come in the events ready to occur; and the promise had been repeated to each of the seven churches in various forms. These events were *shortly* to take place and Jesus would therefore in keeping with his promise come *quickly*. John had testified that Jesus had so promised—and he consistently, believingly and confidently responded, *Even so, come, Lord Jesus*. And it is the recorded fact that their Lord Jesus did come in the events of that generation to which John belonged, the words of Jesus himself being true (Matt. 23:36—24:34—and He whose very name was THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE and THE WORD OF GOD (chapter 19:11-13) was the surety for their fulfillment at that time. The word *amen* meant *so may it be*; and *even so* meant, exactly in that manner. The word *even* connected with *so* meant “precisely,” and *precise* means minutely exact, not varying in the slightest degree from truth and accuracy; and *so* is an adverb of manner—therefore, the words *amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus*, meant “so may it be in this manner, come Lord Jesus.” This was the apostle’s six-word closing prayer to the Lord who had testified to him these things on the Aegean island.

Verse 21: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* They *all* to whom John addressed this benediction were standing on the threshold of all that had been envisioned and disclosed to John. They were the same events described in the words of Jesus (Matt. 24:21), “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”—and in a pathos which even the reader of his words can feel, the Seer of Patmos invoked the grace of Christ to be with them all. And to this benediction of grace, he added *Amen*.

Thus ends the greatest pageantry ever envisioned for disclosure to mortal man. Nineteen full centuries have faded into the pale nations of the past since John’s *Amen*, and

there has been nothing in all history to replace the events of that generation to which this apocalypse belonged. The effort to stage the re-enactment of these scenes of Revelation is scripturally unexegetical and historically anachronistic. The continuous-historical theory is biblically *non-scientific*, not in the occult meaning of the word, but in the sense of its inconsistent exegetics. The future theory is *non-historical* because its whole thesis consists in anachronisms, the taking of events out of the period to which they belong and assigning them to the wrong periods of time, or errors in the order of time. As an end of the world theory this continuous-history view is *non-philosophical* in its millennial phases in that it presents a pessimistic concept requiring the same conditions of tribulation which surrounded the church in the Roman empire to be re-enacted, bringing back into existence the empires of heathenism necessary to fulfill the symbolic delineations of the apocalypse; and a further than that millennial contention that the gospel of the Great Commission is not competent for the conversion of the world and, therefore, this dispensation in a failure to accomplish the purpose of redemption must culminate in another earthly age called *the millennium*. And the future history theory is *non-scriptural* in its disharmony with the purposes and plan of redemption revealed throughout the New Testament. Withal, the future theory is little short of the *nonsensical* in the assertions necessary to bring it down through the dark ages, and is comparable to the efforts of the Roman Catholics to establish the calendar of popes from the apostle Peter to the present pope Paul; and of the Baptists to maintain their claim of an unbroken chain of church succession from John the Baptist. But from one generation to another the links fall out of both these Catholic and Protestant unhistorical chains; and the continuous-history theory of Revelation has never had a chain.

When the book of Revelation is placed where it belongs in the canon of all the other apostolic epistles, in proper chronology before the Destruction of Jerusalem; and as being an apocalyptic vision of the struggle and triumph of the church with the existing power of Judaism and heathenism, its contents fall into complete harmony and all the

parts fit—and when things fit it is a sort of *prima facie* evidence that they are in the right place.

In conclusion, the book of Revelation unrolls in a series of images the sublime panorama of the victory of the church over the great powers of Judaism and Romanism and Heathenism set to the theme of the promise and providence of God in the protection of his Cause and his Church, summed up in the initial divine assurance, *I come quickly*, and in the concluding human prayer of response, *even so, come, Lord Jesus*. It is between this beginning and ending that the visional message of the angels were communicated—the epistles to the seven churches signalling the approach of tribulation; the apocalypses of the conquering Christ and of the victorious church; and the vision of the glorious New Jerusalem—all of which were interspersed with lyric anthems and choral doxologies, which all together impart to the Patmos apocalypse its unique position as the apex of all revelation, and sufficient in itself to vindicate the claim of divine inspiration for all the Scriptures.

Finally, notwithstanding its apocalyptic character in reference to its historical period, and all of the obscurities which have given rise to the legion of speculations, it answers an important practical purpose—by implanting and increasing unwavering faith in the integrity of the Word of God; by engendering hope in the unfailing promises of God; by inducing patience in extreme suffering and sorrow; and by infixing implicit trust in him who is able to save to the uttermost all who believe in him, and come to him, and obey him.

*THE END*







